DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 242 037 EA 016 539

AUTHOR Batten, Margaret
TITLE Issues of the Eighties: Principals' Perspectives and School Practices. ACER Research Monograph No. 22.
INSTITUTION Australian Council for Educational Research, Hawthorn.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-85563-349-2
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 116p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Basic Skills; *Bilingual Education Programs; Career Exploration; Cooperative Programs; Core Curriculum; *Curriculum Development; Discipline; *Educational Change; Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; *Foreign Countries; *Parent Participation; Participative Decision Making; *Principals; Private Schools; Public Opinion; Public Schools; Questionnaires; School Administration; School Community Programs; School Policy; Secondary School Curriculum; Student Development; Student Evaluation; Teacher Guidance; Transitional Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Australia; Pastoral Counseling

ABSTRACT

Over recent years there has been an increasing amount of public and political discussion of educational directions and educational accountability in relation to Australian primary and secondary schools. The study reported in this monograph attempted to address these concerns through a four-stage process: a review of literature exploring community expectations of schooling; the development of a classification of educational issues; a survey of 400 primary and secondary government and nongovernment school principals to determine their priorities among the issues; and detailed studies of school practices that exemplified the priority issues in 27 of the survey schools. Some significant differences between the groups emerged in the data analysis: pastoral care and moral education were issues of particular importance to nongovernment school principals from both levels; cooperative learning was particularly important to primary government school principals; preparation for the world of work was much more important to secondary school principals than it was to primary school principals; and the issues of technology in education and special social competencies were of particular importance to secondary government school principals. From the study of selected schools a number of factors were identified in the areas of program, process, and personnel that were associated with successful practice.
(Author/MJL)

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ISSUES OF THE EIGHTIES

Principals' Perspectives and School Practices

Margaret Batten

EA 016 539

ACER Research Monograph No.22

ISSUES OF THE EIGHTIES

PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES AND SCHOOL PRACTICES

Margaret Batten

Australian Council for Educational Research
Hawthorn, Victoria
1983

Published by
The Australian Council for Educational Research Limited
Radford House, Frederick Street, Hawthorn, Victoria 3122

Printed and bound by
Allanby Press
1A Crescent Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124

Cover design by Louise Coutts.

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication data.

Batten, Margaret, 1936-.
Issues of the eighties.

Bibliography.
ISBN 0 85563 349 2.

1. Education - Australia. 2. School superintendents and principals - Australia - Attitudes. I. Australian Council for Educational Research. II. Title.
(Series: ACER research monograph; no. 22).

370'.994

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Specific impetus for the study came from two sources, the first of which was the invitational conference on Societal Change and its Impact on Education, held by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) in 1980. One of the purposes of the conference was stated as 'a reconsideration of the form and function of education in the light of change in society' (Karmel, 1981:vii), and in one of the background papers Mrs Jean Blackburn, former member of the Schools Commission, commented on a new relationship that had developed between the educational system and the polity.

> The Australian public, and more especially politicians of every hue, are no longer willing to accept the role of putting educational funds on the stump and running. Both the scale of funding and its directions are likely to be further affected by this development, and calls for greater efficiency in demonstrating results are likely to become more insistent. (Blackburn, 1981:83)

The second source of inspiration for the study was the Schools Commission (1980) publication, Schooling for 15 and 16-Year-Olds, the stated intention of which was to 'raise and explore secondary schooling issues' and to 'facilitate discussion of the issues and encourage action continuously to adapt schools to the future' (Schools Commission, 1980:70); the document also contained a request for 'less debate and more monitoring of what is effective in particular places with particular students' (Schools Commission, 1980:23).

These statements about the role of education within the social framework of the 1980s engendered the idea of a study which would identify the educational issues of current importance to the community and the ways in which schools were responding to these issues.

As a preliminary step, it was decided to explore the literature from recent years to find out more about the 'change in society' referred to by Karmel and the effect of this change on education.

The Context of the 1970s

The last years of the 1970s brought forth a wealth of diagnoses and prognoses about education in the next decade. Some writers linked their predictions of impending educational changes to the social, economic, or political changes of the past decade, although Blackburn (1981) expressed doubt about a causal link between these types of changes.

> We may conclude ... that education systems are slow to change in response to

social changes and that there is no unambiguous path connecting such changes with educational responses. (Blackburn, 1981:82)

Whether or not educational change stemming from social and economic causes has occurred or will occur, these contextual factors have certainly influenced the discussion of the educational issues of the eighties in the literature.

The economic factors that were seen to have had a bearing on education centred on the economic recession that followed the era of prosperity of the sixties and early seventies, a recession that brought with it the problem of increased unemployment, particularly in the 15-19 age group. Different patterns of working life were evolving as the impact of technology was felt on the domestic scene and the employment market. There was conjecture about the effect of unemployment on the upper secondary school level and about the link between slower population growth and possible reductions in resource allocations of funds and personnel to schools.

Social factors that were mentioned in connection with current educational issues were: the multicultural nature of contemporary Australian society; the changing role of women; the changing composition of the traditional family unit and the emergence of a diversity of family life styles; and the increase in leisure time that was likely to result from changing work patterns.

The political action that probably had the greatest direct effect on education in the 1970s was the creation of the Schools Commission in 1973; as well as being responsible for large financial disbursements, its purpose was to determine national educational policies and priorities for funding through programs such as the Disadvantaged Schools Program, the Special Education Program, and the Services and Development Program. Since the 1950s the Commonwealth Government had become much more involved in education, particularly in terms of its financial commitment. The percentage of the total expenditure on education contributed by the Commonwealth increased from 2.6 per cent in 1956-57 to 42.1 per cent in 1976-77.

Through the operation of its various programs the Schools Commission sought the realization of the educational principles explicated in its annual reports: principles such as equality of opportunity for all students, diversity of educational choice, co-operation between education systems, greater devolution of responsibility to the local school level, and community involvement in education.

Similar forces were at work at state as well as federal levels during the 1970s: increased emphasis was given by state education departments to the decentralization of decision making through regional offices of education, the encouragement of more active involvement of parents and community members in school governance, and school-based curriculum development (at the same time as the Commonwealth Government established the national Curriculum Development Centre, which involved teachers in its developmental work). Curriculum development during this period saw the emergence of

a new type of broad spectrum development (such as the Language Development Project) and an increased interest in areas such as integrated studies and the biological and social sciences.

The spread of comprehensive education in the 1960s, together with the increased financial investment in education and public belief in the direct relationship between qualifications and employment, led to a higher retention rate in secondary schools in the 1970s and a greater diversity of offerings and opportunities in the tertiary sector, particularly in colleges of advanced education and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges.

Reaction to the Developments of the 1970s

By the end of the decade public optimism and confidence in education, so apparent in the early and middle years of the seventies, had begun to fade, and writers commented on the general feeling of dissatisfaction with the educational process:

> There can be no doubt that Australia enters the 1980s with a sense of crisis pervading the community about the educational system.
> (Sheehan, 1980:75)

> There is disillusionment with the whole educational enterprise, in which so many illusions have been invested. (Blackburn, 1981:83)

> The new times are enrolment decline, resource decline and dissipating public confidence in and satisfaction with Australian schools.
> (Sungaila, 1981:280)

> Unease about schooling is widespread. Confidence in the benefits of schooling individually and socially has given way to doubt and a desire for reassurance.
> (Schools Commission, 1980:2)

Several sources of dissatisfaction were repeatedly mentioned in the literature. Doubts were expressed about the validity of the attempts made by the Schools Commission to achieve equality of opportunity through the allocation of money to upgrade resources in schools. It was suggested that attention should be focused on the quality of educational activities rather than on the amount of resources made available to facilitate the activities (D'Cruz and Sheehan, 1978). Because educational qualifications could no longer ensure a good job, questions were raised about the purpose of education, in particular the value of the academic orientation of secondary schools and about the issue of vocational training versus general education (Tasmania, Committee on Secondary Education, 1977; Tasmania, Education Department, 1978; Sheehan, 1980). Reference was made to the conflicting demands being made on schools: comprehensive education and the variety of new approaches to curriculum development led to public fears of a decline in standards and a call for more emphasis on basic skills; at the same time, it was felt that schools should be doing more in the area of social development to combat the problems created by youth unemployment, alienation, and family break down (Collins and Hughes, 1978; Schools Commission, 1981). Crittenden

(1981:52) wrote of a 'crisis in identity' in the secondary school where teachers find themselves called on 'to play such roles as those of parents, social workers, employment agents, and psychologists as well as teachers'.

Framework of the Study

The general aim of the present study was to classify the wide range of community expectations of schooling outlined in the previous section, and to document the ways in which schools were attempting to meet these expectations.

The study was planned in four stages:

1 a literature search to identify the educational issues of importance to members of the school and wider communities;

2 the development of a classification of educational issues;

3 a survey of school principals to determine their priorities among the issues in the classification and to gather information about school practices that reflect these priorities;

4 studies of school practice that exemplify the important issues identified in the survey.

Literature search. To obtain a comprehensive range of opinion about the educational issues of the eighties, it was decided to establish a broad source base for the literature search within a narrow time frame. Thus literature with a publication date preceding 1977 would not be considered, but any post-1977 pronouncement on educational issues that emerged from the literature search would be given consideration; the sources would range from newspaper commentaries to committee findings to public opinion surveys. Because the focus of the study was on Australian schools, the literature search would be confined to Australian reports.

Classification of educational issues. It was planned to present the issues derived from the literature search in the form of a classification that would cluster types of issues under different headings; such a classification would be of use not only in the present study but for future research studies in the area. To validate the classification structure and content, feedback would be sought from a range of school and community groups.

Survey of principals. Surveys of community expectations of education in Australia have tended to focus on a particular State or an area within a State or a single school. This study would use an Australia-wide sample with proportional representations from States and from government and non-government systems. There would be equal representation from primary and secondary schools, with 200 from each level. As well as system and level, variables such as size and location of school would be taken into

account in the data analysis, thus providing detailed information of a kind not previously available.

Studies of school practice. Because it would be impossible to survey representatives of all sectors of the school community, the principal was chosen to speak on the school's behalf about the issues that were important to individual schools. In the second part of the questionnaire to principals, respondents would be required to give brief descriptions of the school practices that incorporated their priority issues, and from these descriptions about 12 schools would be selected for follow-up visits. These visits would enable more information to be collected about successful practices, and would provide an opportunity to collect the views of other members of the school community - teachers, students, and parents - about the issues that the principals considered to be of importance.

The first three stages of the study are discussed in Part I of this report, and the fourth stage in Part II.

PART I EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

CHAPTER 1

THE LITERATURE SEARCH

The literature search was made through the Australian Education Index 1979-81, and additional references were followed up that were mentioned in the literature. The search was limited to Australian references in the period 1977-81, with particular attention given to the years 1979 and 1980; the turning point of a decade presents a natural opportunity for retrospective reflections and predictive pronouncements. It was decided to focus mainly on literature that viewed the issues from a broad rather than a narrow perspective, on discussions of expectations of schooling and directions in education rather than specific topics such as examinations or class size. There is a vast amount of literature on specific issues, but these writers are often long-term proponents of certain approaches regardless of time and context and do not discuss the place of a particular issue in relation to the whole spectrum of educational issues.

Some of the statements that were made about expectations or directions were, although philosophically interesting, too general to be of use in the identification of issues. Between the extremes of too general and too specific fell a number of references that could be used in the development of a classification of educational issues; among this number were 14 opinion surveys and over 40 other statements from books, newspapers, journals, research reports, conference reports, and committee findings. In these references, opinions were expressed by teachers, parents, students, employers, media commentators, educational administrators, staff in tertiary institutions, and educational researchers.

The Surveys

All 14 surveys were concerned with expectations of education but, as can be seen from Table 1.1, there was considerable variation among the surveys in sample size, target population, response rate, method, and format. For instance: sample sizes ranged from 95 to 4500; the target population could be a single group (such as students), the school community, or the general public; the coverage varied from a single school to Australia-wide representation; the lowest response rate was 46 per cent, the highest 90 per cent. As far as the method and format were concerned, the instruments used were questionnaires or structured interviews containing statements about aims and expectations of schooling (and sometimes knowledge of and satisfaction with schools); responses were usually recorded on some form of Likert scale such as 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree', or 'Extremely Important' to 'Of No Importance'. Some of the surveys asked respondents to differentiate between what schools were doing and what schools

Table 1.1 14 Surveys of Community Expectations of Education

Survey	Sample	School level	Publication date	Title	Method	Number of items	Number of responses
Anderson	Students, ACT, Yrs 10-12	Secondary	1980	Schools to Grow in	Questionnaire & group interviews	28	2845
Baumgart	General Public, NSW	Primary & Secondary	1980	Survey of Public Opinions about Schools in NSW	Structured interviews	53	1341 (60%)[a]
Botsman & Browne	General Public, Urban areas, Qld	Primary & Secondary	1977	Community Attitudes to Education in Queensland	Structured interviews	45	950 (46%)
Collins & Hughes	Teachers, Students & Parents, NSW	Secondary	1978	Expectations of Secondary Schools: A Study of Views of Students, Teachers & Parents	Questionnaires & interviews	47	4500
Collins et al.	20 year olds & Mentors (e g counsellors)	Secondary	1980	Looking Backward: Views of Secondary Schooling Held by Recent School Leavers, and those who Work with them	Structured interviews & questionnaire	-	222
Campbell & Robinson	Teachers, Students, Parents, Business, Unions All States	Primary & Secondary	1979	What Australian Society Expects of its Schools, Teachers and Teaching	Questionnaire	60	2184 (72%)
Dunne	General Public, Adelaide	Primary & Secondary	1978	Public Opinions about Schools	Structured interviews	30	1183
Dynan	Students, WA	Secondary	1980	Do Schools Care?	Questionnaire & written comments	14	1077
Fawns & Teese	Students, Yrs 10 & 11 Vic., Tas., ACT	Secondary	1980	Student Attitudes to their Schooling	Questionnaire & written comments	30	5000
Fitzgerald & Williams	Parents, One P-12 School, Vic.	Primary & Secondary	1981	Parental Attitudes to Education: Nhill	Structured interviews	45	235 (90%)
Mason	Teachers, Students, Parents, Australia (12 surveys)	Primary & Secondary	1979	An Evaluation of Research in Community Expectations of Education	Questionnaire	109	-
Meade	Teachers, Students, Parents, Sydney	Secondary	1981	The Educational Experience of Sydney High School Students	Open-ended questionnaire & interviews	-	4370
Rosier	Parents, All States	Primary & Secondary	1979	Priorities in Education	Consensus response to questionnaire	28	393 Schools (50%)
Vanzetti	Parents, One Primary School, NSW	Primary	1978	A Survey of Parental Opinions at Jervis Bay Primary School	Questionnaire & interview	72	85 (90%)

[a] Response rate

should be doing, which led to an analysis of data in terms of salience and dissonance scores for items; other analyses took the form of cross-tabulations, frequency distributions for individual items, and mean scores for scales or groups of items. A number of the surveys adapted an instrument that had been developed in England by Ashton et al. (1975) for use with primary school teachers; several others used the

Botsman and Browne (1977) survey as a guide, which had been adapted from an American Gallup Poll on attitudes to education; others again used instruments developed by the researchers themselves, often after discussions with and feedback from the relevant community groups.

Because the surveys had a common purpose, to record expectations of education in various community groups, it would seem logical to report on similarities and differences in the results, but the variations mentioned in the previous paragraph raise doubts about the usefulness of detailed comparisons. Further obstacles to comparative discussions of surveys were pointed out by Mason (1979), who analysed the responses to 12 surveys of community expectations of education. Her concern was with the nature of the items. She felt that most items were statements of 'best possible outcomes' which inevitably drew wide support from respondents, for who could deny that students should be able to read well, to understand themselves and be sensitive to others? The resultant difficulty for the comparative researcher lay in the lack of discrimination which characterized survey findings, a difficulty compounded by the use of rating rather than ranking response formats. Another problem with the nature of survey items that Mason encountered concerned the terminology employed in item statements. She found that items worded in general terms (for example, 'Has a good background of general knowledge') tended to be rated higher on importance than similar items expressed in specific terms (for example, 'Knows history, geography and social studies').

It was not only the nature of the items and the way they were written that presented difficulties in making a comparative study of the 14 surveys, but also the item range and the grouping of items for the purposes of analysis. The problem with the range of items was that, while some issues were common to all surveys (such as reading and number skills, job-related skills, and motivation for learning), others appeared only occasionally, and some of these 'occasional' items were rated as very important by certain respondents (such as 'politeness' by parents and 'teacher-student relationships' by students); therefore comparisons of these results with the results of surveys lacking such items were difficult. The grouping of items into scales as an aid to interpretation also complicated comparative discussion. The same broad areas were covered by the scales (such as basic skills, personal development, and practical skills) but the focus was not always quite the same - one study had a Social Competence scale, another a Social/Moral Emphasis scale, and a third had two scales, Social Awareness and Socialization/Discipline. As a result of the slight differences in focus, similar items would appear in different scales in two surveys: for instance, 'writing reports and letters' was in an Intellectual scale for one survey and in a Practical scale for another; the Social Competence scale in one survey contained items on sex education and drug education, while in another survey sex education was in the Physical scale and drug education in the Practical scale.

For all the reasons mentioned above, there will be no detailed comparative discussion of the outcomes of the 14 surveys included in the literature review. Some idea of the nature of each of the surveys (for convenience, Mason's study is described as a 'survey' although it is a synthesis of items from 12 surveys) can be gathered from Table 1.1; useful summaries of most of the surveys are contained in a recent publication by Collins and Hughes (1982), Where Junior Schools Are Heading. In the rest of this section, short descriptions are given of four of the larger-scale surveys, followed by a general discussion of the most frequently mentioned issues in the 14 surveys.

Survey of Public Opinion about Schools in NSW (Baumgart et al., 1980). The sampling procedure employed in this study was to select 15 dwellings from each metropolitan and country district in the State and interview all inhabitants in those dwellings over the age of 18. The responses of the 1341 people interviewed were tabulated according to variables such as age, sex, level of education, and country of origin. The findings closely paralleled those of similar surveys in South Australia and Queensland. Respondents were asked to rate statements about goals of schooling both for the importance of the goals and for the success of schools in achieving them. The researchers grouped 24 of the items into five scales concerned with the role of schools, and in the data analysis gave each a mean rating for importance and success. All five scales were rated on average as above 'moderately important' goals for schools in the following order of importance:

1 Basic Skills (three items, e.g. 'Teaching fundamentals like reading, writing, and arithmetic');
2 Personal Development (seven items e.g. 'Developing a desire to learn more throughout life');
3 Social Competence (six items, e.g. 'Helping students to understand the rights and duties of citizenship');
4 Practical (five items, e.g. 'Teaching home-making and handyman skills');
5 Cultural (three items, e.g. 'Developing an interest in art, literature, music, drama').

Basic Skills and Personal Development received the highest mean rating for the success of schools in achieving the goals, although there was a greater discrepancy in these two scales between mean ratings of importance and success than in the other three scales.

What Australian Society Expects of its Schools, Teachers and Teaching (Campbell and Robinson, 1979). The sample in this study consisted of 174 schools from all States, and five categories of respondents were selected from each school community - teachers, students, parents, local business people, and unionists. Data analysis of a pilot survey had resulted in the identification of five major sets of educational expectations:

industrial, social, academic, humanistic, and fundamentalist. Each set of expectations was represented in seven blocks of issues: the functions of schools, the teacher's role in decision making, the development of curricula, knowledge which schools should develop, handling of values, motivation of students, and fostering of learning. The 60-item questionnaire presented statements in issue blocks, each of which covered the five expectation sets. Responses to statements took two forms, one on a five-point scale of legitimacy and the other on a three-point scale of desired emphasis. The researchers identified regions of consensus and lack of consensus between the five groups of respondents.

In all groups consensus was higher on legitimacy of expectations than on requests for increased emphasis. The researchers did not find much difference between the responses of the five groups, although 'in general, the teachers and the unionists were more person-oriented and less industrially-oriented than were business persons, parents and students' (Campbell & Robinson, 1979:58). Seven items were given the highest rating on both legitimacy and increased emphasis, all drawn from the humanistic, academic and social sets of expectations; the items that comprised this 'blueprint for change in education' (Campbell & Robinson, 1979:57) were:

- Prepare children to cope with, and contribute to, life in society.
- Prepare children to work co-operatively with others in building their cultures and societies.
- Develop in each child a sense of personal worth and esteem.
- Schools should ensure that children know how to discover new knowledge.
- Schools should ensure that children know how to assemble facts, pose questions, and arrive at tentative answers.
- Children should be motivated by teachers displaying warmth, supportiveness, and respect towards them.
- Learning should be fostered by children and teachers working together on significant problems.

Looking at other items rated as important by all groups, the researchers concluded that 'schools are being asked to assume new responsibilities relating to socialization functions which were previously undertaken by agencies such as the home and the neighbourhood' (page 58).

Expectations of Secondary Schools (Collins and Hughes, 1978). The questionnaire to parents, teachers, and students in New South Wales contained 47 items on aims of education, divided into three groups: (1) 'Basic' items, covering skills in reading, arithmetic, and clear speaking (three items); (2) 'Fringe' items, covering areas such as sex and drug education, home management, sport, creative expression, religious education (twelve items); and (3) 'Factor' items, covering five general orientations to

education - academic (seven items), socialization and discipline (five items), personal autonomy (seven items), practical (seven items), and social awareness (six items).

More than 30 of the 47 goals were considered to be of more than moderate importance to the respondents. The basic skills items were at the top of the rank order of importance for all three respondent groups and academic items at the bottom, particularly those concerned with humanities subjects. For students, the next most important goals were practical ones concerned with job-related skills and knowledge and daily-living skills, followed by fringe items concerned with drug, sex, and health education. Teachers rated as second most important those personal autonomy items concerned with the development of independent thinking and study skills, acceptance of others, and self-confidence. Parents' preferences showed a mixture of the trends in the other two groups; they were concerned with self confidence, drug education, independent work attitudes, practical writing skills, and punctuality.

Discrepancy ratings were calculated to record the differences between importance and achievement ratings for the goal statements. The three groups were reasonably satisfied with the school's achievement in the basic skills of reading and arithmetic as well as in most fringe areas, and they felt that schools were coping well with academic subjects (although these were rated low in importance). Parents and students expressed most dissatisfaction with the school's teaching of practical skills, while teachers were most dissatisfied with achievement in the personal autonomy and social awareness areas. There was general agreement across the three groups that schools should improve their teaching of clear and effective speaking, job-related knowledge and skills, life skills and money management, and independent thinking.

An Evaluation of Research in Community Expectations of Education (Mason, 1979). An analysis was made of the findings of 12 research studies involving the educational expectations of Australian teachers, parents, and students. The studies contained a total of 417 items which, on the basis of commonalty, were reduced to 109 composite items or goal statements, scored on a seven-point scale of importance. The statements were categorized under seven headings: intellectual, physical, aesthetic, religious, emotional/personal, social/moral, and practical.

There was general agreement across the three groups on the relative importance of half the 109 composite items. The goals considered to be the most important were those concerning the basic skills (reading, mathematics, speaking, listening, and writing) and two items from the social/moral scale concerned with acquiring a set of moral values and knowing what to do in emergencies; in the middle range of importance was a variety of goals concerning personal, social and physical development; and lowest in importance were goals dealing with artistic endeavour, religion, and most traditional academic subjects. In addition to those goals that were important to all groups, parents placed particular value on enquiry skills, self-confidence and self-respect, motivation, practical

writing skills, job guidance, and punctuality; teachers rated as extremely important enquiry and analytic skills, understanding of self and others, health and safety knowledge, and social skills and understanding; students' highest ratings were given to a number of job-related goals and daily life competencies such as driver education and sex education.

In an overall summary of the findings, Mason highlighted two findings as most worthy of comment and further consideration: one was the relative lack of emphasis given by all groups to many subjects which currently comprise school curricula, such as history, science, and literature; the other was the emphasis given by students and parents in particular to very specific practical skills and knowledge which have traditionally been considered the responsibility of the home rather than the school, such as money management, driver education, and family-living skills.

Important Issues

Community groups were represented in the 14 surveys listed in Table 1.1 in the following numbers: general public (3), business and unions (2), teachers (4), parents (7), and students (8). It was particularly useful to have such a relatively large representation of student opinion, and also employer representation, as these were sectors of the community that did not feature in the rest of the literature. Trends in the various sectors were for the general public, and business and unions, to emphasize the importance of preparation for the world of work, basic skills, and enquiry and processing skills; teachers valued basic skills, enquiry and processing skills, the development of personal identity, and the study of social structures and social issues; students placed most importance on preparation for the world of work, teacher-student relations, and the acquisition of daily life competencies; and parents thought that basic skills, preparation for the world of work, daily life skills, personal identity and student independence were the most important issues.

Overall, the most frequently mentioned issues in the surveys, in order of importance, were: preparation for the world of work, basic skills, daily life competencies, the development of personal identity, teacher-student relationships, and enquiry and processing skills.

Other Statements of Issues

The other statements about the educational issues of the eighties came mainly from journal articles and research or committee reports. The range of people who made these statements did not include students or business people, but both these groups had been represented in the surveys. It was not that these groups had nothing to say; rather that the type of literature search undertaken did not have direct access to the appropriate

sources such as trade journals or school newspapers. Groups that were represented in the other statements that had not been specifically identified in the surveys were educational administrators (such as representatives from the Commonwealth Schools Commission, state committees of inquiry into education, and directors general of education) and people from tertiary institutions who were involved in educational research.

The discussions of Australian education and where it should be heading in the 1980s centred on many of the issues identified in the surveys - issues such as basic skills, daily life skills, and preparation for work, as can be seen from the following extracts.

On basic skills:

> The importance of basic skills was one of the most commonly raised points during this study. Apart from the traditional view of employers, which has changed little in fifty years, that young job seekers should have greater skills in such areas as accuracy in spelling or legible writing, there was more general interest in whether the standards of basic skills in our schools are high enough and if not what should be done. (Schools Commission, 1980:20)

> I believe it is towards these essential skills (literacy and numeracy) that we must redirect our attention in the eighties. (Lacy (Assistant Minister for Education), 1979:15)

On daily life skills:

> There are some aspects of the curriculum which will need special emphasis in all schools during the 80s ... a movement towards a broader interpretation of personal development, one which emphasizes more strongly the social responsibilities of people living together in communities, and recognizes that intellectual development is not the only responsibility of schools. (South Australia, Education Department, 1981:26)

> Trends in the late 1970s and 1980s suggest that more parents are relying on the school to provide social skills and not just educational skills. (Rootsey (Victorian Teachers Union), 1982:18)

On preparation for the world of work:

> The study of work, as it is appropriate to the school ... is not essentially concerned with the making of choices about the kind of paid work individual students will do, though it could greatly assist that. It is rather concerned with definitions of what work is, why it is important to people, how its nature and availability has been affected by technological change in the past, is being affected in the present and is likely to be affected in the future. (Schools Commission, 1980:16)

> This will require the schools to co-operate with institutions carrying out programs more directly related to the labour market and to rising unemployment. (D'Cruz and Sheehan, 1978:289)

The surveys tended to focus almost entirely on curricular issues, but in the rest of the literature other types of issues emerged as well, mainly to do with the organizational aspects of school. Two of the more frequently mentioned topics of this type were the autonomy of schools and the structure of schooling.

> There needs to be a move away from extreme centralism towards a more autonomous, flexible, local basis for making educational decisions, especially by parents and teachers, in an attempt to decrease the isolation of the school and lead

education towards a more locally-sensitive and culturally-related system of schooling. (Pettit, 1980:15)

If the concept of a school day was extended to cover a period of say from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. then the possibilities of creating jobs for more teachers and increasing community participation in continuing education are readily apparent. (Wood, 1980:19)

A comprehensive youth policy would include a range of options for youth (15-19) rather than the traditional full-time education or full-time employment. (Karmel, 1979:14)

Altogether, from the surveys listed in Table 1.1 and the other literature, it was possible to identify over 70 issues that people considered to be important for Australian schools in the 1980s. The issues that were most frequently mentioned were: the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics; the practical skills and competencies that enable an individual to function efficiently in daily life; preparation for the world of work; the development of personal identity and a sense of personal worth; and catering for the individual needs of students.

Approaching the next stage of the project, it was decided that, rather than give school principals a list of 70 issues to sort through, it would be advisable to order the issues into some sort of categorical framework.

CHAPTER 2

THE CLASSIFICATION OF EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

The literature search had led to the identification of 70 issues of current importance for schools. This number seemed too unwieldy for the purposes of the questionnaire, so an attempt was made to combine issues - for instance, the issue of 'examinations and assessment' was combined with 'credentials and reporting' as these seemed to be two aspects of the one issue. In this way the number of issues was reduced to 30.

Despite this reduction there was still an inevitable overlap between issues, inevitable because of the complex interrelationship between various emphases and aspects of schooling - for example, 'basic skills' and 'core curriculum' were identified as separate issues of concern, and yet basic skills are often seen as a principal component of a core curriculum.

Some of the 70 issues were deleted, not because they were unclear or unimportant, but because they were either too general or outside the control of the school. 'Equality of opportunity' was one issue that was abandoned because its scope was so broad that it covered many other more specific issues and therefore, in the context of this classification, it was redundant. Another reason for the deletion of such general issues was that their very generality made them universally acceptable and therefore inappropriate for inclusion in a questionnaire designed to uncover the degrees of importance accorded to various educational issues. 'Funding' and 'privatization of education' were issues that were considered to be outside the control of the school; these types of issues were excluded from the classification because school principals, the target group for the questionnaire about issues, would be powerless in most cases to do anything about these issues within their schools, no matter how important they believed them to be.

The Classification Framework

The literature search had already shown that there were two types of issues, those concerned with school organization and those concerned with the curriculum and the process of learning. The research literature on school effects provided some justification for this dichotomous view of education. Barr and Dreeben (1978:91), discussing the production function model as it applied to school effects, distinguished between 'the flow and character of the productive (schooling) process, and the properties of the firm (the school) itself'; Bidwell and Kasarda (1989:402) supported this distinction, maintaining that 'schools are organizations that conduct instruction. Schooling is the process through which instruction occurs'.

'School and schooling', 'structure and process', 'organization and curriculum' seemed to be similar conceptual pairings, and the last-mentioned pair was chosen to represent the major categories in the classification. The thirty educational issues derived from the literature search could be slotted quite easily into either of these two categories.

Organization

The 12 issues with an organizational orientation seemed to be divided into two areas: those dealing with the management structure of the school, and those dealing with the teaching structure of the school. Support for this organizational division can be found in the work of Centra and Potter (1980) who developed a structural model of school variables that influenced learning outcomes; listed as the two main items of the 'within school conditions' block were 'administrative organization' and 'instructional organization', which were very similar to the 'management' and 'teaching' areas of the present classification. The issues in this classification were grouped under the management and teaching headings in the following way:

Management

1 School aims and their achievement. The school should be accountable for its product; it should provide a clear statement of aims and the appropriate procedures for their achievement; it should also devise a means of determining the extent to which school aims are being achieved.

2 School autonomy. The dependence of the school on a central education authority should be greatly reduced. The school community (including teachers, students, and parents) should be able to make its own decisions about policy, curriculum, and organization.

3 Community involvement. Students and staff should take part in community activities, and the community (parents and other interested citizens) should participate in school governance and activities.

4 The role of school leaders. The school principal, and others in leadership positions, should be given the power and training to facilitate change, to create structures and provide support for the implementation of policy.

5 Co-operation between educational institutions. Improvement and expansion of educational opportunities for students can be achieved by broadening the operational base of the single school to include co-operative ventures across levels (primary, secondary, TAFE) and across systems (government, non-government).

6 Access to education. The structuring of the school program should be open and flexible to enable periodic as well as regular access from a wider range of people

than the present school population. Alternative methods of time allocation should be considered.

7 Alternative organizational units. To cater for the needs of students of different ages, interests, and abilities, consideration should be given to schooling structures that differ from conventional primary and secondary structures, for example, senior colleges for Years 11 and 12, subschools, vertical grouping.

Teaching

8 Assessment and credentials. New assessment, reporting and credentialling procedures are needed which take into account a broad range of attributes in addition to cognitive skills.

9 Discipline and control. The enforcement of discipline and control in the school and in the classroom has become increasingly difficult. How to exercise control without being unduly repressive or restrictive is the problem.

10 Teaching methods. Innovative approaches to the teaching task should be encouraged, such as team teaching, teaching across grades, the use of older students or peers as tutors.

11 Pastoral care. School staff members should be accessible to students, and provide the care and counselling necessary for the personal development of students.

12 Professional development of teachers. In-service education is needed to stimulate teachers (in a projected era of non-mobility) and to provide them with the skills necessary for their expanding roles as educators.

The definitions which accompanied the issues attempted to summarize the points that were made in the literature.

Curriculum

The 18 issues with a curriculum orientation were grouped under four headings derived from a model of schooling developed by Mitchell and Spady (1978) and Spady and Mitchell (1977, 1979). The model specified four societal expectations of schooling: to encourage and enhance the personal development of intellectual, physical, and emotional skills and abilities; to facilitate and certify performance competency; to generate and support social integration among individuals across groups; and to nurture a sense of social responsibility for students' own actions and for the groups to which they belong.

Equivalents to these four functions of schooling are described in the research literature. Browne (1981:22) talks of the development of new skills, professionalization, socialization, and status achievement; Meade (1981:9) suggests that the school is

concerned with providing self-development, equality of educational opportunity, mutually rewarding involvement with others, and capabilities and competencies necessary to improve society.

Personal Development

13 Catering for student needs. School practice should be able to adapt to the needs and potential of the individual student, particularly when the student is excluded from equal participation in education because of language, culture, sex, geographical isolation, or intellectual or physical handicap.

14 Relevance of learning. For effective learning to take place, it is essential to make learning tasks directly applicable to the interests and experience of the students.

15 Integration of subject areas. There should be integrated planning across the curriculum, drawing on knowledge from separate subject areas to support themes and topics.

16 Understanding the world of work. The study of work as a human activity should be part of every school curriculum, a study that might include, but should not be confined to, such activities as work experience and career guidance.

17 Enquiry and processing skills. Student must be taught how to seek out, interpret, and evaluate information from various sources.

18 Communication skills. Students should be trained to communicate effectively in speech and in writing.

19 Leisure education. Because of the likelihood of increased leisure time in the future, children should be given the opportunity to participate in appropriate sporting, recreational, and cultural activities.

20 Technological education. Students should be introduced to specific applications of technology, and helped to understand the context and consequences of technological change.

Performance Competency

21 Academic excellence. Standards of academic excellence should be maintained and disciplined studies in traditional subjects made available for students who would benefit from them.

22 Basic skills. The strongest emphasis should be placed on bringing all children to a level of competence in the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics.

23 Core curriculum. There should be a core curriculum for all schools which contains a set of learning experiences that should be acquired by all students as a basis for personal development and social participation.

24 Vocational training. Schools should give more attention to the teaching of knowledge and skills to equip students for future occupations.

Social Responsibility

25 Development of independence. It is the school's responsibility to help its students to become resourceful, self-directing, autonomous individuals who are capable of making their own decisions.

26 Life role competencies. Schools should equip students with specific practical skills to enable them to cope with and contribute to life in society.

27 Moral education. The curriculum should include a study of the moral aspests of social issues, either as a separate subject or in the context of several disciplines.

Social Integration

28 Development of personal identity. Each student should be helped to develop an understanding of self and a sense of personal worth.

29 Co-operative learning. Schools should stress the value of co-operation rather than competition as a motivation for learning, and teach children how to work together for their mutual benefit.

30 Multicultural education. Children should be taught the value and meaning of cultural diversity within a cohesive social framework, with reference to the Australian context.

Community Feedback

The framework of the classification had been established and the issues defined. Before sending the questionnaire containing the classification to school principals, it was decided to subject it to a trial run, not with principals alone, but with members of the community groups who had provided the commentary on the issues in the first place. The trial would serve a dual purpose: it would help to identify any difficulties or ambiguities in the general format of the questionnaire and the wording of issue definitions, and it would determine whether the issues identified in the literature covered the full range of community concerns and interests.

The Directory of Australian Associations (1981) and Australian Education Directory (1980) provided the names of community groups from which to select a sample. The

directories listed state and national associations and other official bodies and covered all the groups that had appeared in the literature search. It was thought that a target number of 100 for the trial run would cover all groups and allow for adequate representation from all States. The groups represented in the sample were employers, educational administrators (from regional offices of education, Catholic education offices, and Independent schools associations), institutes of educational research, principals associations, teachers associations, and parents associations. Students were under-represented, because students associations tend to be at the school or local level rather than at the state level; however, students had been better represented (and therefore their view more thoroughly canvassed) than any other category in the 14 surveys discussed in the last chapter. Education centre personnel were included as a new category; their opinions were sought because of their position at the interface between schools and the community.

The Questionnaire

The issues were presented under their category headings, as described in the previous section. Respondents were asked to choose up to four Organization issues and up to six Curriculum issues which they considered to be of major importance to schools. They were asked also to comment on the categories and the issues definitions, and to make additions to or deletions from the list of issues. The questionnaires were sent to the presidents, secretaries, or executive officers of the various community groups represented in the sample. These people were asked to respond to the questionnaire on behalf of their associations or groups, or as individual members of the groups they represented.

Questionnaires were sent to 133 people, although the final number was reduced to 125, mainly because the people concerned represented groups that had been disbanded. There was a 61 per cent response rate to the questionnaire, which was a satisfactory result for a trial run such as this, where the focus was on reactive comment rather than a quantitative measure of community opinion. Of the 76 responses, 66 indicated which issues they considered to be most important, and many offered comments on the classification; the remaining 10 offered comments only.

The Outcome: Modification of the Classification

As a result of the many helpful comments made by respondents, some changes were made to the classification of educational issues.

The category headings of Management and Teaching in the Organization section seemed to be satisfactory, but there was some confusion about the four categories in the Curriculum section; in particular, respondents found it difficult to distinguish between Social Integration and Social Responsibility. These two categories were therefore

amalgamated under the heading of Social Development; to balance this amalgamation, the few Performance Competency issues were absorbed into Personal Development. Thus the new classification contained two sections, Organization and Curriculum, with two categories in each section.

Another source of confusion was the lack of stated criteria for determining the relative importance of the issues - were the issues to be regarded as 'problem areas' or were they 'policy areas'? In the questionnaire to principals the following explanation was offered:

> According to the Oxford dictionary an 'issue' can be a 'point in question' or an 'outcome', so that in the context of the school an issue may be important either as a subject for debate ('something we are thinking about') or as the realization of a policy decision ('something we are doing'). For the purposes of this Classification the focus is on the second of the two definitions, the things you are doing in the school as a result of policy decisions.

As a result of respondents' comments, the wording of the issue definitions was changed so that they became less dogmatic, less ambiguous, and, it was hoped, more lucid and accurate.

It was pointed out by respondents that there was still some overlap between issues, so certain issues were combined and the definitions adjusted accordingly: Understanding the World of Work (issue 16) and Vocational Training (issue 24) became Preparation for the World of Work; Community Involvement (issue 3) and Access to Education (issues 6) became The School and the Community; and Development of Independence (issue 25) was split into its personal development and social development components, and became part of Enquiry and Processing Skills in the one case and Development of Personal Identity in the other. Teaching Methods (issue 10) was deleted because it was seen as part of School Aims and their Achievement, not as an issue on its own.

Some of the issues were seen to be too general: Relevance of Learning (issue 14) was deleted because it was part of many issues; Catering for Student Needs (issue 13) was deleted, and replaced by two more specific issues, Education of Disadvantaged Students and Education of Gifted Children (which also contained part of the inadequately defined issue 21, Academic Excellence).

There were several additional issues mentioned by respondents that had not been included in the classification; the issues were religious education, physical education, health education, teacher-student relationships, and a study of contemporary social structures and issues. All these issues had come up in the literature search but had not been listed as separate issues for various reasons: teacher-student relationships were thought to be too general a topic, religious education and physical education provided too narrow a focus on particular traditional subjects, and a study of contemporary society was implied in several other issues. The issues were subsequently included in the principals questionnaire because a sufficient number of community respondents felt that

Table 2.1 Community Questionnaire: Major Issues for Total Sample

Item no.	Issue	Percentage of respondents selecting issue (N = 66)
	Organization	
1	School Aims and their Achievement	68
12	Professional Development of Teachers	58
4	The Role of School Leaders	42
2	School Autonomy	36
3	Community Involvement	33
	Curriculum	
13	Catering for Student Needs	58
18	Communication Skills	58
17	Enquiry and Processing Skills	53
28	Development of Personal Identity	53
25	Development of Independence	49
22	Basic Skills	44
23	Core Curriculum	35
29	Co-operative Learning	33
16	Understanding the World of Work	30

they were issues of considerable importance for schools. Physical Education (including health education) became a separate issue, as did Contemporary Society and Social Change. Religious education was specifically mentioned in the definition of Moral Education, and teacher-student relationships were included in the definition of Pastoral Care.

The Outcome: Patterns of Response

The main purpose of the community questionnaire was to obtain feedback on the nature and wording of the classification of issues before sending it out to school principals. A secondary purpose was to identify the issues in the classification which community respondents felt were the most important for schools. Listed in Table 2.1 are the 14 issues (out of a total of 30) that were identified as important by at least 30 per cent of the respondents. The cut-off level was fixed at 30 per cent because the response curve dropped markedly at this point. The most frequently mentioned issues are listed in order of importance under the two category headings.

The community directives for education that seem to emerge from these figures are, in the organization area, that the school community should be responsible for setting goals for the school and determining the best means of achieving them, and that staff development should be a priority. In the curriculum area, it was the more general issue statements that drew support rather than those that were subject-referenced, a trend that echoes the research evidence quoted earlier (Mason, 1979); in this area, the

community directive seemed to be that individual differences should be taken into account, and that each child should be helped to develop a sense of personal identity, and should be equipped with recognized learning and communication skills.

The patterns of response for particular groups are noted in Table 2.2. Employers are not included because there were only three responses from this group; it should be noted, however, that there was unanimous agreement among the three respondents on the importance of assessment, communication skills, and core curriculum.

The major issues for the groups indicated in Table 2.2 represent support from approximately three-quarters of the respondents in each group, except for teachers, whose support for issues was more diverse (with the most popular issues eliciting support from half the group). The findings of Campbell and Robinson (1979), in their Australia-wide survey of community groups (see Chapter 1), showed a similar trend - a much wider range of opinions among teachers than among other groups. Further confirmation of this trend was found, in the present study, in a closer examination of the two largest groups, teachers and educational administrators. The latter group was made up of representatives of the three systems (government, Catholic, and Independent); some differences in attitudes and emphasis might have been expected within this group, but the respondents of the three systems showed a high degree of agreement. On the other hand, in the 'teachers' group, there were differences in responses not only between systems, but also between teachers and principals. Those from government schools were more supportive of in-service education, discipline (particularly the principals), and community involvement and access to education than those from non-government schools; the reverse was true (more support from non-government schools) for the issues of leisure education, and academic excellence (particularly the principals). The issues supported almost exclusively by principals (of all systems) were school aims and their achievement, and the development of personal identity; teachers gave particular support to co-operative learning and understanding the world of work.

Table 2.2 identifies the five or six priority issues for each of the five groups. There was some variation between groups and, as might be expected, the groups that had most in common (as far as the issues were concerned) were those that were most closely associated in the educational world: thus the views of parents were closest to those of education centre personnel, administrators were closest to researchers and teachers, education centre personnel to parents and teachers, researchers to administrators and teachers, while teachers seemed to stand in the centre with links to all groups. It would appear that, in this small sample of community expectations of education, parents had least in common with the other groups in the school community, and teachers had the most in common with the other groups.

Teachers are often accused of being limited in their views and unaware of the world outside the classroom. The information that emerged from this stage of the study

Table 2.2 Community Questionnaire: Major Issues for Particular Groups

Item no.	Issue	Teachers (N=15)	Parents (N=12)	Ed. Admin. (N=21)	Research (N=8)	Ed. Centres (N=6)
	Organization					
1	School Aims	*	*	*	*	*
2	School Autonomy	*				
3	Community Involvement		*			
4	Role of School Leaders			*	*	
12	Professional Development	*		*	*	*
	Curriculum					
13	Student Needs	*	*		*	*
17	Processing Skills	*		*	*	
18	Communication Skills	*	*	*		*
22	Basic Skills		*			*
25	Development of Independence				*	
28	Personal Identity			*		

- that there is a diversity of views within a group of teacher representatives and a commonalty of outlook with other education groups - helps to discredit this accusation. It does not help to solve the problem of where schools should be heading in the eighties; it merely confirms that many demands are being made on schools and that teachers are aware of these demands and attempting to respond to them.

CHAPTER 3

QUESTIONNAIRE TO PRINCIPALS

A revised version of the classification of educational issues was produced which incorporated the alterations and modifications suggested by community group representatives, as discussed in Chapter 2. It was this version of the classification that was sent to school principals in 1982 (see Appendix I).

The introductory page of the questionnaire to principals explained how the classification had been developed, and defined the way in which the word 'issue' was used - as an outcome rather than a point in question. The task required of principals was three-fold: first, to identify the issues of major current importance in their schools (up to four issues in the Organization section and up to six issues in the Curriculum section, plus any other important issues that were not included in the classification); second, to describe some of the current practices in their schools that exemplified their priority issues; and third, to identify any educational issues of potential importance to their schools and possible constraints on this implementation.

The purpose of this stage of the study was to determine what the schools themselves saw as the important educational issues of the eighties. Ideally the survey would have canvassed the views of teachers, students and parents, but at a national level and within the time constraints this was impossible. The principal was chosen as the focus of the study as representative of the most powerful influence in the school, in a position to make a major contribution to policy decisions on organization and curriculum. It was planned that the next stage of the study would entail visits to some of the schools in the sample to supplement principals' views with those of teachers and students.

Factors that were taken into account in selecting the sample and analysing the data were the conventional ones of level (primary, secondary), system (government, non-government), size (large, small), and location (metropolitan, country). It was felt that these were the school typology variables most likely to affect the principals' choice of the most important educational issues for their schools; level and system, because of different origins, traditions and orientations; size, because this has been a contributory factor in the development of theories of schools as organizations; and locations, because of different community pressures and relationships in city and country.

The rest of this chapter describes the administration of the questionnaire, the data analysis, and the implications of the findings.

Table 3.1 Survey Sample and Response Rate

	Primary Schools			Secondary Schools		
	Proposed sample	Actual sample	Response rate (%)	Proposed sample	Actual sample	Response rate (%)
Government	157	151	60	134	127	70
Non-Government	43	43	65	66	66	82
Total	200	194	61	200	193	74

Administration of the Questionnaire

The questionnaires, together with a covering letter, were sent out to a sample of school principals in all States between March and July 1982; time of dispatch was dependent on the written consent of individual state directors general to the involvement of government schools in the project. Two rounds of reminder letters were sent to non-respondents at monthly intervals.

The Survey Sample

A stratified random sample of 200 primary and 200 secondary schools was selected to take part in the survey, with proportional representation from States and from school systems (government, Catholic, and Independent). The variables of location and size were not incorporated into the sample structure as it was felt that both would be fairly represented in a random sample. Research studies which focus on students or teachers often reduce or make adjustments for the number of very small schools (such as one-teacher primary schools) in their samples because, although there is a relatively large number of these schools, they represent only a very small proportion of the total student or teacher populations. In this study the sample population comprised principals speaking on behalf of their schools, therefore school size was not a relevant factor in the sample structure; however the relatively high proportion of very small schools in the sample enabled comparisons to be made with larger schools in the data analysis.

Government schools in Tasmania were not available to take part in the study, so the final number of schools in the sample was reduced by six in the primary sector and seven in the secondary sector (see Table 3.1).

Response Rate

As can be seen from Table 3.1, the response rate in the survey was higher from secondary schools than from primary schools, and within the two levels there was a higher response from non-government schools than from government schools. For the purpose of this table, and for the data analysis reported in the next section, the categories of Catholic and Independent schools were combined to form a non-government

Table 3.2 Response Rate: School Practices and Other Issues

	Primary Schools	Secondary Schools
School Practices	101 (86%)*	128 (90%)
Potential Issues	77 (65%)	109 (76%)
Other Issues	18 (15%)	29 (20%)

* Percentage figure given refers to percentage of total response not of total sample

school category, because the numbers in the 'ndependent school category were too small to justify its separation from the other non-government category (Catholic schools).

It is difficult to say why primary school principals were more reluctant than their secondary counterparts to participate in the survey. It might have been expected that principals of very small primary schools in remote areas, feeling that many of the issues were irrelevant to their situations, would influence the low return rate; in fact there was little difference in the response rates of the smaller and larger primary schools, except in Victoria where the small school response rate was low. It could be conjectured that the principals of primary schools are more satisfied with and sure of their schools' policies and practices, and are under less public pressure than the secondary school principals.

Even among the respondents there was a greater measure of interest and involvement expressed by secondary than by primary school principals. This can be seen in Table 3.2, which records the number of principals at the two levels who described the school practices that exemplified their priority issues, and those who took up the invitation to identify other (unlisted) issues and potential issues of importance to their schools.

Analysis of the Data

The purpose of the data analysis was to provide answers to two questions:

1 What educational issues are of major current importance in this sample of schools, according to their principals?

2 Does the size or location of a school or the system or level to which it belongs have any bearing on the way its principal responds to the Classification of Educational Issues?

The answer to the first question was obtained by a simple frequency count of responses to the 26 issues in the Classification (see the first column of Table 3.3) which is discussed in the next section. The other columns in Table 3.3 present the data in four different ways as a basis for further examination in the search for an answer to the

second question. The distribution of the sample according to level and system has been explained in an earlier part of this chapter; the location dichotomy was linked to a distance of above or below 45 kilometres from a capital city or Geelong or Newcastle; and the division according to size was fixed at 30 students in the 10-year-old cohort at primary level and at 100 students in the 14-year-old cohort at secondary level.

It should be remembered that the Classification of Educational Issues was divided into the two categories of Organization (with sub-categories of Management and Teaching) and Curriculum (with sub-categories of Personal and Social Development). Because respondents were asked to choose up to four issues in the former category and up to six in the latter, the outcomes for the two categories are discussed separately.

Rank Order of Issues for Total Group

Figure 3.1 gives the rank order of issues in the Organization and Curriculum categories for the group as a whole (the actual percentages can be found in the first column of Table 3.3).

The first four issues in the Organization list received support from more than half the respondents. The first two, School Aims and Pastoral Care, were rather general in scope and uncontentious in content, which might have contributed to their popularity - at a very basic level a principal's interpretation of these two issues could have been, 'We have a syllabus which we get through each year, and we care for our students'. The definition of issues such as School Autonomy, School and the Community, and Alternative Organizational Arrangements contained specific references to the involvement of various sectors of the educationally concerned community both within and outside the school, which perhaps made these issues more contentious, and they did receive less support from principals. On the other hand, Professional Development and Discipline received considerable support although they too were concerned with more specific aspects of school organization - perhaps this reflects a concern of the principals that both students and teachers should learn how best to fulfil their respective roles within the structure provided by the school. The low rating given to Training for Administrators might indicate that the principals felt that they and their fellow administrators were carrying out their own roles satisfactorily and did not need such help.

It is apparent from the rank order of Curriculum issues that the principals in the sample gave a high priority to the acquisition of cognitive skills. Three of the four issues that received more than 50 per cent support were of this kind: namely Basic, Communication, and Enquiry and Processing Skills; the exception is the issue from the social development sub-category, Development of Personal Identity, which is perhaps the Curriculum equivalent of Pastoral Care in the Organization category, both containing a general statement about the nurture of the individual student.

Table 3.3 Issue Frequencies (percentages) for Total Group and for Level, System, Size, and Location

Issue	Total Group (N=261)	Level		System		Size		Location	
		Prim. (N=118)	Sec. (N=143)	Govt. (N=179)	Non-Govt. (N=82)	Large (N=125)	Small (N=136)	Metrop. (N=138)	Country (N=123)
Organization									
School Aims	70	70	69	73	63	72	67	68	72
School Autonomy	28	26	30	26	33	32	25	30	26
Administrators	15	17	13	18	9	18	12	16	14
Community	38	46	32	42	31	28	48*	33	45
Alternative Organization	23	14	29*	23	22	28	18	27	18
Assessment	28	30	27	27	32	27	29	27	30
Discipline	55	58	53	54	57	54	57	54	57
Pastoral Care	63	54	70*	53	85*	59	66	65	60
Professional Development	63	70	57	68	50*	64	61	64	61
Curriculum									
World of Work	43	12	68*	41	46	46	41	39	46
Enquiry Skills	51	62	43*	54	46	50	52	49	54
Communication Skills	56	67	47*	62	44*	54	57	52	60
Disadvantaged Students	34	36	32	36	31	37	32	35	33
Gifted Students	23	23	22	22	23	29	17	25	20
Integrated Studies	16	25	8*	15	20	14	18	17	15
Technology	23	13	32*	26	17	26	20	23	23
Physical Education	33	39	28	37	23	37	29	36	30
Leisure Education	28	29	28	27	31	25	32	26	31
Basic Skills	65	75	57*	68	59	62	68	58	73*
Core Curriculum	34	38	30	37	27	30	37	31	37
Moral Education	33	27	37	10	82*	24	40*	36	29
Co-operative Education	25	34	17*	31	11*	25	24	27	22
Multicultural Education	15	16	13	15	15	16	13	17	10
Personal Identity	54	59	50	48	68*	54	54	52	56
Social Competencies	20	7	32*	23	15	23	18	17	24
Contemporary Society	17	12	20	16	18	18	15	20	13

* Percentage differences that are significant at the 5 per cent level according to Oppenheim's (1966) monograph.

Organization	Curriculum
1 School Aims and their Achievement	1 Basic Skills
2 Pastoral Care	2 Communication Skills
3 Professional Development of Teachers	3 Development of Personal Identity
4 Discipline and Control	4 Enquiry and Processing Skills
5 The School and the Community	5 Preparation for the World of Work
6 School Autonomy	6 Education of Disadvantaged Students
6 Assessment & Credentials	7 Core Curriculum
8 Alternative Organizational Arrangements	8 Physical Education
9 Training for Administrators	9 Moral Education
	10 Education for Leisure
	11 Co-operative Learning
	12 Technology in Education
	13 Education of Gifted Children
	14 Special Social Competencies
	15 Contemporary Society and Social Change
	16 Integrated Studies and Courses
	17 Multicultural Education

Figure 3.1 Rank Order of Issues for Total Group: Organization and Curriculum

The four Curriculum issues that received least support from principals showed a pattern that was the reverse of the top four issues, in that three of the four were from the social development sub-category. It is particularly surprising that Multicultural Education, an issue that has loomed large in political as well as educational debate in the 1980s, should appear at the bottom of the rank order with only 15 per cent support.

The traditional emphasis of schooling has been on learning acquisition rather than social development, although over recent years various sectors of the school and wider community have advocated that more school time should be allocated to social development. It would seem that the principals in this sample incline to the more traditional view of education.

Other Issues

Principals were given the opportunity to make additions to the Classification of Educational Issues, but only a small number responded (see Table 3.2). Of those that did respond, few put forward ideas that were new or appropriate to the Classification: some of the issues mentioned merely involved restatements of issues already listed, and others belong under the heading of Potential Issues ('points in question' rather than 'outcomes' as outlined in the questionnaire instructions).

A much higher percentage of the principals (more than two-thirds) responded to the invitation to list potential issues of importance to their schools. Most of the issues they identified under this heading were linked with organizational problems and areas of dissatisfaction rather than innovatory ideas. The four most frequently mentioned issues were the following:

1 staffing - problems of structure, mobility, morale, inexperience, and lack of support staff;

2 inadequate buildings and facilities;

3 funding - method and amount;

4 relevance of curriculum, balancing academic and social education, responding to the needs of the community.

Differences between Groups

The four double columns in Table 3.3 show how the response frequencies were presented in four different ways so that a decision could be made about further investigations of differences between responses of principals when grouped according to school level, system, size, and location.

The Oppenheim (1966:287-292) nomographs were used as a simple screening device to determine the significance of the differences in percentages. With groups of these sizes a difference in percentage of 15 per cent was significant at the 5 per cent level. The percentage differences that reached this level are identified in Table 3.3; there were ten instances found in the grouping of issues according to Level, six in the System grouping, two in the Size grouping, and one in the Location grouping.

There were so few percentage differences of consequence in the Size and Location groupings that these factors were omitted from further analysis. The higher number of percentage differences of consequence in the Level and System groupings seemed to justify further investigation of the effects of these factors on principals' responses.

Level and System Differences

It would not have been helpful to use the Level and System percentages given in Table 3.3 as a basis for further analysis because the two sets of responses are not independent, coming as they do from the same sample of principals. To facilitate further investigation of the data, the responses were divided into the four separate categories of primary government, primary non-government, secondary government, and secondary non-government so that the influence of the two factors, level and system, could be more clearly seen and evaluated. Table 3.4 gives the response frequencies for the four groups; Figures 3.2 and 3.3 present the same information in a graphic form that makes it easier to assimilate the differences between the groups in the support they gave to the various issues.

Several differing patterns of response can be discerned in the presentation of Organization issues in Figure 3.2: Pastoral Care was given far more support by non-government than government school principals; Alternative Organizational Arrangements received more support from secondary than from primary principals; most

Table 3.4 Issue Frequencies (percentages) for Systems within Levels

Issues	Primary		Secondary	
	Govt. (N=90)	Non-Govt. (N=28)	Govt. (N=89)	Non-Govt. (N=54)
Organization				
School Aims	76	54	70	69
School Autonomy	24	32	28	33
Administrators	19	11	17	7
Community	47	43	37	24
Alternative Organization	16	11	29	28
Assessment	29	32	25	32
Discipline	56	64	53	54
Pastoral Care	46	82	60	87
Professional Development	47	57	63	46
Curriculum				
World of Work	14	4	67	69
Enquiry Skills	64	54	43	43
Communication Skills	71	54	52	39
Disadvantaged Students	39	29	33	31
Gifted Students	24	18	20	26
Integrated Studies	24	29	5	15
Technology	13	11	38	20
Physical Education	42	29	33	20
Leisure Education	27	36	28	28
Basic Skills	77	71	60	52
Core Curriculum	38	39	36	20
Moral Education	10	82	10	82
Co-operative Learning	42	7	19	13
Multicultural Education	13	25	16	9
Personal Identity	52	79	43	63
Social Competence	8	4	38	20
Contemporary Society	13	7	18	24

principals gave firm support to School Aims and their Achievement, although this issue seemed to be less important to non-government primary school principals; and support for the School and the Community decreased quite markedly from the primary government group through the other two groups to the secondary non-government group.

There were two major differences between groups in the responses to the Curriculum issues charted in Figure 3.3: Preparation for the World of Work was very important to secondary principals but not to primary principals, and Moral Education was of prime importance to non-government school principals but of negligible importance to their government school counterparts; the latter pattern was repeated, though in a less extreme form, in the responses to Development of Personal Identity. The three Skills issues (Basic, Communication, and Enquiry and Processing) showed a steps-and-stairs pattern of response, with medium support from the secondary non-government group through to high support from the primary government group. There were several instances where one group stood out from the other three: Co-operative Learning

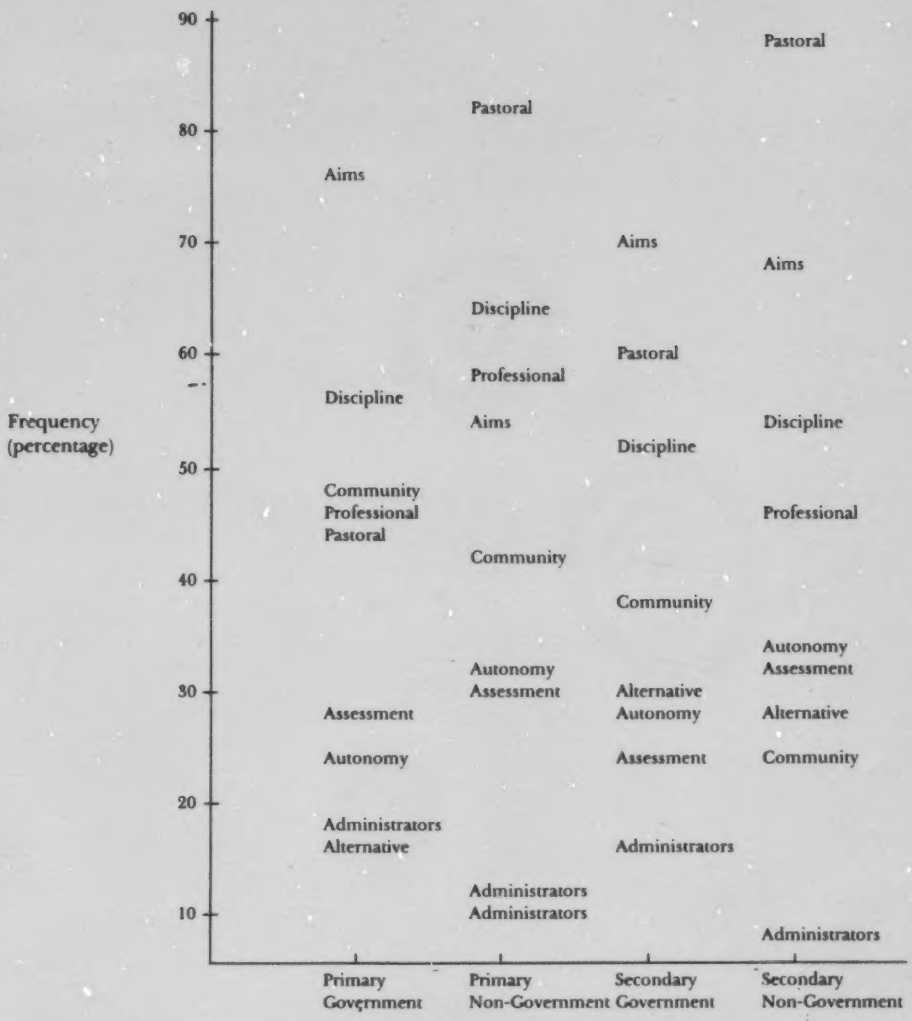

Figure 3.2 Rank Order of Organization Issues for Principals in Government and Non-Government Primary and Secondary Schools

received higher support from primary government school principals; Technology in Education and Special Social Competencies were particularly popular with secondary government principals, while the support for Integrated Studies was very low from this group; and secondary non-government school principals gave considerably less support to Physical Education and Core Curriculum than did the other three groups.

It was decided to undertake chi-square analyses of the data in order to establish a basis for making judgments about the differences in responses between groups that was more reliable and valid than the subjective scanning of graphs and percentage tables.

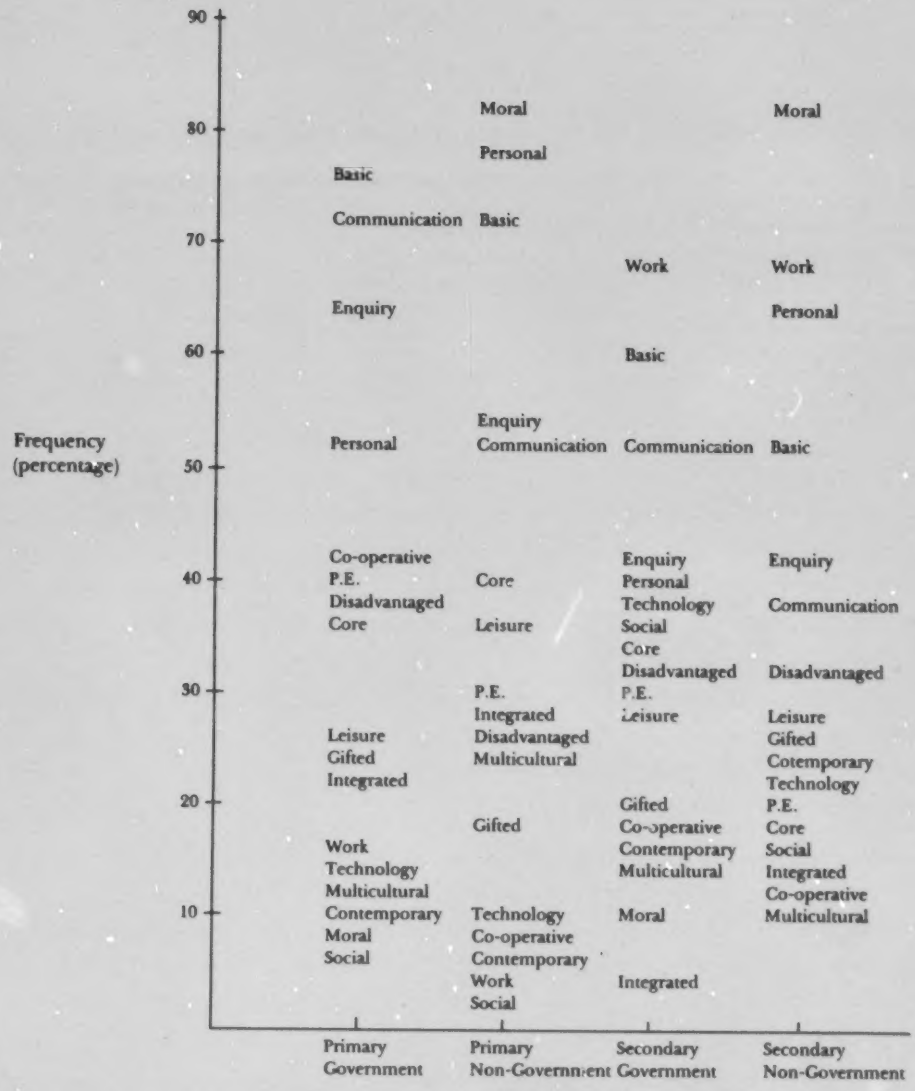

Figure 3.3 Rank Order of Curriculum Issues for Principals in Government and Non-Government Primary and Secondary Schools

The chi-square analysis is used to test whether a significant difference exists between an observed number of responses falling in each category and an expected number based on the null hypothesis of no interaction between classification categories (Siegel, 1956:43). The null hypothesis in this case would be that there is no difference expected between the four groups of principals in the proportional amount of support they give to an issue. It was determined that the region of rejection of the null hypothesis would consist of all

Table 3.5 System by Level Differences in Issues

Issue	Category showing strongest response
Pastoral Care	non-government
Professional Development	secondary government
World of Work	secondary
Enquiry Skills	primary, particularly government
Communication Skills	primary, particularly government
Integrated Studies	primary
Technology in Education	secondary, particularly government
Basic Skills	primary, particularly government
Moral Education	non-government
Co-operative Learning	primary government
Personal Identity	non-government, particularly primary
Special Social Competencies	secondary, particularly government

Note: Chi-square values significant at the 0.01 level.

values of chi-square which were so large that the probability associated with their occurrence was equal to or less than one in a hundred ($p \leq 0.01$). Table 3.5 lists the 12 issues which fulfilled these requirements. Although the chi-square statistic provides evidence of significant differences between groups, it does not identify the nature of the differences, so a brief comment on the response trend in each of the 12 contingency tables is included in Table 3.5.

The evidence of the chi-square analysis confirmed most of the descriptive comments made in previous paragraphs on the pattern of response. The major areas of difference between principals, on the grounds of the level and system to which they belong, may be summed up in the following way.

1 Primary. Two areas emerged as being of greater importance to primary school principals than to secondary school principals. The first area concerned the acquisition of foundation learning skills (Communication Skills, Basic Skills, Enquiry and Processing Skills) and was given particular emphasis by primary principals in government schools; the second area of special interest to primary principals was centred on the issue of Integrated Studies, and for primary government school principals this co-ordinated approach to curriculum planning was allied to the importance of a co-operative approach to learning on the part of students (the Co-operative Learning issue).

A sharp division emerged in the attitudes of primary principals to certain issues that concerned the social development aspect of the curriculum as it applied to individual students: non-government school principals gave top priority to the issue of Moral Education whereas only 10 per cent of government school principals identified this issue as important; likewise, Development of Personal Identity and the organizational issue of Pastoral Care were markedly more important to non-government school principals.

2 Secondary. The distinguishing feature of the secondary principals' response pattern was a concern to associate the curriculum more closely with the activities of the world outside the school boundaries: Preparation for the World of Work was an issue of prime importance to all secondary principals; and the principals from the government sector gave particular support to the issues of Technology in Education and Special Social Competencies.

The differences between government and non-government secondary principals were the same as those identified in the primary sector, with higher emphasis given by the non-government school principals to the social development issues of Moral Education, Development of Personal Identity, and Pastoral Care.

Review

Previous sections have been devoted to a description and discussion of the outcomes of the survey of principals on educational issues of importance to their schools. What has to be determined now is the value of this study when placed in the context of other similar projects - to what extent do the findings of this survey confirm or contradict the findings of other surveys, and does this study have anything new to contribute to the body of research in the area?

Comparison with Other Surveys

The 14 surveys discussed in Chapter 1 had high representation from school community members, particularly parents and students, and moderate representation from the wider community. To recapitulate, the most frequently mentioned and most highly rated issues in these surveys were: preparation for the world of work, basic skills, daily life skills, the development of personal identity, teacher-student relations, and enquiry and processing skills. There was a strong measure of support for these findings in the current study, in that the principals gave high priority to all but one of the six issues. The one exception was the issue of Special Social Competencies (Daily Life Skills in the Community questionnaire); in contrast to the strong support given to the issue in the 14 surveys, it received support from only 20 per cent of the respondents in the principals' survey, ranking 14th out of the 17 Curriculum issues. A closer examination of the other surveys provides a partial explanation of the disparity: in most of the surveys that included parents, students, or teachers, it was the parents and students that placed great emphasis on the acquisition of practical skills (such as daily life skills), while teachers accorded the issue far less importance. Thus the views of the principals on the place of practical living skills in the curriculum were similar to the general views of teachers in the other surveys but at odds with other members of the school and wider communities.

This conclusion is in accord with a point made in the Introduction to this report, that the community has widened the scope of its expectations for schooling, so that teachers are called upon to be 'parents, social workers, employment agents, and psychologists as well as teachers' (Crittenden, 1981:52).

Another source of comparison with the survey of principals is the outcome of the survey of community members (reported in Chapter 2), which used the initial version of the principals questionnaire. The respondents included parents, educational administrators, educational researchers, employers, and education centre personnel as well as teachers and principals.

In the Organization section, School Aims and Professional Development were given highest priority in both surveys. (Pastoral Care must be discounted as it did not appear as a listed issue in the Community questionnaire.) There were two issues that elicited very different amounts of support from the two groups of survey respondents. One issue of this kind was Training for Administrators (The Role of School Leaders in the Community questionnaire); this issue was selected as important by 42 per cent of community respondents but by only 15 per cent of the principals. This seems to indicate that those outside the school are more convinced than those inside it that teachers in leadership positions need training and help to enable them to function more effectively. The second issue to produce disparate results was Discipline and Control, which received far stronger support from principals than from community members (a 34 per cent difference in response). The definition of the issue in the second questionnaire was broader than in the first and made specific mention of aspects such as the development of self-responsibility in students; nevertheless the difference in response does highlight the obvious concern felt by principals about this aspect of school organization and operation.

In the Curriculum section the choice of important issues was very much the same in both groups (again discounting the issues that were not common to both questionnaires). The main emphasis was on the acquisition of cognitive learning and communication skills, although Basic Skills was rated as a more important issue by principals than by community representatives. The Work issue was identified by 43 per cent of the principals and only 30 per cent of the community representatives, but this may have been because there was a separate issue of Vocational Training on the Community questionnaire which may have taken some support away from the Work issue.

The Contribution of the Study

The survey of principals differed from other surveys in three ways and, because of this, the findings provide a source of new information about schools in the early 1980s.

1 The study provided information, on a national level, of the views of principals

about priorities in education. Most of the surveys that included educational practitioners focused on a school's teachers rather than its administrators, and, as the Community questionnaire revealed (see Chapter 2), the views of these two groups often differed.

2 Most of the other surveys were confined to curricular issues; the survey of principals added an organizational component because it seemed warranted by the evidence of the wider literature search on educational issues (see Chapter 1) and was supported by research studies of school effects (see Chapter 2).

3 The nature of the sample was such that conclusions could be drawn not just about the views of school principals in general, but about the differences in the views of principals from government and non-government primary and secondary schools.

The analyses of the data showed that there was a greater number of significant differences in level and system responses to Curriculum issues (10 out of 17) than to Organization issues (2 out of 9), and that level rather than system was the differentiating factor in most cases.

The three issues that did evoke markedly different responses from the systems were Moral Education (a difference of 70 per cent), Pastoral Care (33 per cent difference), and Development of Personal Identity (21 per cent difference); all these issues were given much stronger support by the non-government than the government school principals. One of the special claims by which non-government schools seek to justify their existence has been the provision of care for the spiritual, social, and emotional development as well as the intellectual development of the individual student, and the findings of the current study support this claim. What the survey could not determine was the degree to which the day-to-day operation of a non-government school might reflect these principles. It was planned in the next stage of the study (see Part II of this report) to visit secondary schools, both government and non-government, where a beginning could be made in the investigation of the pastoral care component of schooling, to determine whether the 'all-round care' philosophy was successfully translated into practice in the non-government schools. It would also try to determine whether the same principles were operating (in what ways and with what degree of emphasis) in government schools, perhaps under less readily identifiable guises. Another more carefully focused study with a wider sample of schools would be needed to provide more than speculative answers to these questions.

The responses to nine issues were found to be significantly different on the basis of level. The primary school profile that emerged from the statistics was of a group of principals (and this was particularly true of the primary school principals from the government sector) that laid strong emphasis on foundational learning skills and

co-operative endeavour, an outcome that is not surprising, for these have long been accepted as appropriate areas of concern for primary schools.

The acquisition of learning skills was not as important to secondary as to primary school principals, although the three issues concerning these skills were ranked among the top five curricular issues for both government and non-government secondary school principals. The main factor which distinguished the secondary sector from the primary sector was the former's emphasis on the necessity to prepare its students for the world of work. It has always been acknowledged by secondary school educators that they have a responsibility to prepare students for the time they emerge into the adult world. Until the mid-1970s this responsibility was manifested in two ways: providing information about career and tertiary study requirements, and ensuring that students reached whatever academic standards were necessary for them to proceed to tertiary education or to a job. Since that time the scope of secondary school responsibility in this area has broadened considerably; over two-thirds of the survey respondents from secondary schools saw as important such activities as 'the study of work as a human activity, career guidance, work experience, training in special occupational skills, understanding the implications of employment' (definition of Issue 10 in principals questionnaire).

The secondary school principals from government schools seem to have extended their region of responsibility even further by stressing the importance of equipping students with knowledge and skills that would enable them to cope better with the contemporary world. This concern is seen in the support given by this group of principals to the issues of Technology in Education and Special Social Competencies. It would be useful, both for educational theory and practice, for a follow-up study to focus on case studies of the different ways in which schools incorporate these components into their curricula.

PART II EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

CHAPTER 4

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY OF SCHOOL PRACTICE

The four stages of this research project show a progression from a theoretical to a practical perspective on educational issues. The first three stages, discussed in Part I, involved the development of a classification of educational issues derived from the literature and a survey of principals to determine their priorities among the issues. The fourth stage, which is the subject of Part II of the report, sought to examine the way in which those issues were reflected in educational practice in school settings.

Framework of the Fourth Stage of the Study

The Schools Commission (1980) report, which provided the impetus for this study, contained some pointers to possible criteria for identifying successful school practice. The Commission's study, Schooling for 15 and 16 Year-Olds, focused on a particular age-group but included in its discussions the years leading up to and following this period of schooling. A major conclusion of the study was:

> In their general orientation most schools lag in their adjustment to the needs of a full range of students for the last two decades of the twentieth century... The challenge cannot be met, in the Commission's view, by anything less than a fundamental reappraisal of the approach to the compulsory years of schooling. (Schools Commission, 1980:5)

Working from the assumption of the need for reappraisal and adjustment in schools, a view supported by many current writers (see Introduction), the Commission went on to identify two principles which it believed could provide a basis for the adjustment process: valuing the whole age group, and relating knowledge to life.

1 Valuing the whole age group. The Commission suggested that schools should seek to build the confidence and competence of all students, to broaden the criteria of achievement to include definitions of worth additional to those of academic excellence and sporting prowess. 'In our view it is essential to reassert as a fundamental stance about schooling that every student should be valued and positively expected to succeed' (Schools Commission, 1980:7).

2 Relating knowledge to life. The Commission maintained that the modes of teaching in many schools were not connected closely enough with the realities of the students' lives, and that it should be possible for schools to:

> give emphasis to knowledge in a way which passes on the cultural content of the society, which is useful in a range of settings in the world and which involves the personal development of the students as well. In this way the difficulties of the academic curriculum from which many students get little

> and which is alienating to many may be overcome as may be the difficulties which arise if teaching is based solely on students' current interests. (Schools Commision, 1980:11)

Thus, in the Commission's terms, schooling would be judged successful if it met a broad range of personal and social needs, gave each student the experience of success, and made learning relevant to the student. 'Schooling' as used by the Commission is a much broader concept than 'school practice' as used in this study, so it would not be expected that each practice examined would necessarily meet all the criteria, but these criteria did provide a useful basis from which to work in describing and evaluating the outcomes of specific school practices.

Conduct of the Study

Although the first three stages of the study dealt with educational issues of concern to both primary and secondary schools, it was decided that the fourth stage of the study would concentrate only on secondary schools. There were three reasons for this decision: first, the response rate to the principals questionnaire seemed to indicate that secondary principals were more interested in the approach taken by this study than primary principals; second, the literature on educational issues focused on secondary education as the area most in need of reappraisal; and third, because only a limited number of schools could be visited, it was necessary to impose some boundaries on the scope of the investigation.

The last page of the principals questionnaire allowed space for principals to write brief descriptions of 'practices in your school that exemplify priority issues'. The school practices selected for further investigation were those that seemed to have something to contribute in one of the areas identified as important by secondary school principals, although some practices were included that were not among the principals' top priorities but did seem to have something worthwhile to offer in terms of the Commission's criteria.

Seventeen schools were visited in four States: nine government, four Catholic and four Independent schools. There were 10 schools in other States or in remote country areas that were contacted by telephone to find out more about the school practices their principals had described. In the initial planning of the study of school practices, it was thought that 10 or 12 school visits would be enough for one person to cope with; but, when the questionnaires came in, it was found that the 'brief descriptions' of school practice given by the principals were often very brief indeed. As it was often difficult to judge the worth of a practice from just a few lines, it was decided to increase the number of visits to allow for possible disappointments. It was anticipated that some schools might need a time allocation of only an hour or two, while others might warrant

a couple of days. As it happened there were no disappointments - every school had something of value to contribute to the study, and many made multiple contributions. Information was collected not only about successful attempts at translating issues into practice but also about unsuccessful or partially successful attempts and the reasons for failure. It was found that no more than one day was needed for a visit; within this time span, enough information could be collected from principals about the relevant practice or practices.

During the visit, documentation was collected, tape-recorded discussions were held with administrators, teachers, and students, and, where appropriate, observations were made of the particular practice under consideration. In the time available it was not possible to talk to parents, although discussion with other members of the school community included reference to parent involvement and opinion. The discussions with members of the school community were structured to elicit information about a particular school practice in terms of: initiation and planning, facilitating and constraining factors in implementation, supportive structures and resources available, and the effects of the practice on those involved and on other members of the school population.

The 17 school visits and 10 telephone calls produced an abundance of information about many issues, some of which had not been specified by the principal on the questionnaire but emerged in the course of discussion. During the development of the classification of issues, the overlap between issues had prevented certain problems, but these were nothing compared with the difficulties experienced in the analysis of interview data about school practices. While one practice might be readily recognized as an exemplar of a certain issue, a number of other issues could be subsumed within it: for instance, a transition education program was a good example of Preparation for the World of Work, but the program was also relevant to Communication Skills, Education for Leisure, Development of Personal Identity, and Special Social Competencies.

Despite the overlap and merging of issues, it was possible to categorize the information about school practice under a number of issue headings from the Organization and Curriculum sections of the Classification of Educational Issues, using multiple school sources to report on each issue.

The descriptions of school practice contained in the following chapters do not represent the full range of activities that were going on in the 143 secondary schools in the survey sample; nor do they represent the most successful school practices to be found in the country. They do show what some schools are doing about a number of important educational issues in a variety of different ways, some run-of-the-mill, others exciting and innovatory, but all of them making an attempt to give better educational provision to the children in their care.

Table 4.1 Identification of Schools and Practices

School Number	System	Focus of Interest
1	Government	Aims, Assessment, Core Curriculum
2	Independent	Aims
3	Catholic	Aims
4	Government	Aims
5	Government	Discipline, Co-operation, Autonomy, Work
6	Government	Discipline, Co-operation, Assessment, Work
7	Catholic	Discipline, Co-operation, Autonomy, Pastoral Care
8	Government	Discipline, Work
9	Government	Co-operation, Work
10	Government	Co-operation, Work
11	Catholic	Co-operation
12	Catholic	Co-operation, Assessment, Work
13	Government	Co-operation, Pastoral Care
14	Government	Co-operation
15	Catholic	Assessment, Core Curriculum
16	Government	Assessment, Basic Skills
17	Government	Autonomy, Pastoral Care
18	Government	Autonomy, Basic Skills
19	Independent	Autonomy, Pastoral Care, Work
20	Catholic	Autonomy, Pastoral Care
21	Independent	Autonomy, Pastoral Care, Work
22	Catholic	Autonomy
23	Government	Autonomy
24	Government	Autonomy
25	Independent	Pastoral Care
26	Government	Basic Skills, Work
27	Government	Basic Skills, Work

In order to preserve confidentiality of information, while at the same time making it possible for readers to link particular schools with descriptions of practice, it was decided to give each of the 27 schools a number. Table 4.1 lists the school numbers, the systems to which they belong, and the issue headings under which particular school practices are described.

CHAPTER 5

ASPECTS OF SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

The Organization issues covered in the following pages are School Aims and their Achievement, Pastoral Care, Discipline, Assessment and Credentials, School Autonomy (which incorporates some aspects of School and Community), and one component of Alternative Organizational Structures (co-operation between educational institutions). The only priority issue that does not appear is Professional Development, because when it was mentioned by school personnel it tended to be in relation to other issues as preparation for carrying out a program (for example, staff development activities were a component of the development of a core curriculum, and counselling courses were undertaken by teachers in a school that was introducing a pastoral care program).

School Aims and their Achievement

This issue was judged to be important by two-thirds of the secondary school principals in the survey, but there were few specific examples given of practice in the questionnaire responses other than comments like 'a thorough examination of our policy is being carried out' or 'the whole staff is working on a review of aims and policy'. It would seem that statements of aims were commonly produced by schools, but there was little mention of the other component of this issue, an assessment of the extent to which aims were achieved. The vice-principal of School 1 discussed the process and the possible reasons for schools failing to consider this further component. She and the principal worked together on a statement of aims for the school which was discussed at several senior staff meetings.

> We've got bits of paper to prove that we did it but I don't think it makes any impact on the organization because we didn't follow it through and insist that faculties did something with it. It would take an enormous amount of time. We did the easy part; the difficult part is linking up the insights you got out of the setting down of aims exercise with actual practice, and that's where the energy disappears because it's so hard to do. I have worked in schools where it has been done, but it takes a lot of motivation. Its main value is not any grand justification of theory but the fact that it makes teachers ask questions about what they're doing and thus gives validity to the aims.

Three principals described aims and evaluation exercises of a more comprehensive kind in which their schools had been involved.

1 School 2, an Independent school, had undertaken an evaluation, based on the American Independent School evaluation model, in which members of staff were actively involved. Despite the principal's reservations about the process, which he suspected had a 'capacity for building in the status quo', it resulted in the

crystallization of two critical issues for the school to resolve - one concerned with the definition of the school's identity in relation to the changing nature of its student population, and the other concerned with the lack of communication between staff (from the two campuses and within subject areas). The first issue was still unresolved, but action had been taken on the second issue, in that in-service time had been devoted to the development of curriculum objectives and sequential learning processes in a number of subjects by small groups of teachers, each group containing teachers from both campuses and from all year levels.

2 School 3, a Catholic school, had become involved in a three-stage program of evaluation originally developed by some Catholic schools in America. During the first stage, a series of residential seminars with teachers from other Catholic schools are held to explore a personal and communal commitment to the vocation of teaching in Catholic schools. In the second stage a profile of the school graduate is developed, which involves working out the non-negotiable elements in five areas of the schooling process - academic learning, personal maturity, religion, social justice and improvement, and becoming a loving and caring person. The third stage involves undertaking an intensive curriculum review using the profile as the reference point.

3 The staff of School 4, a government high school, was assisted by parents and students in the development of a questionnaire containing 27 statements of educational objectives for students covering seven areas: Mathematical Skills; Literacy Skills; General Academic Objectives; Practical, Artistic and Physical Objectives; Attitudes to School and Learning for Students; Social Attitudes at School for Students, and General Social Objectives for Students. The questionnaire was administered tc all staff members, all students, and 60 parents from each form level; the exercise was repeated one year later and again four years later to determine the degree of agreement between staff, students and parents and to check on the stability of the year level outcomes across time. There was a high degree of agreement between the three groups of respondents in most areas; there was some difference in the patterns of response across the seven year levels, and these patterns remained the same even after five years. During this five-year period a statement of aims was enunciated and, following the third survey, curriculum reviews were undertaken by subject faculties in the light of the specified objectives.

Comment

It is not only school principals who give high priority to the issue of school aims and their achievement. The Schools Commission (1980:62) stated that, next to a consideration of the leadership role of the principal, 'the action which will most benefit schools will be

general reconsideration of objectives and organization'. A national sample of parents who participated in a survey on educational priorities (Rosier, 1979:10) gave as one of its top priorities a 'better evaluation of the extent to which the aims of education are being achieved in the schools'. The number of requests to the Education Department for school reviews from secondary schools in Victoria, for instance, also indicates the measure of concern for this issue. However, as remarked earlier, there seems to be a gap between principle and practice in this area. Logan (1980:28,29), in an attempt to present the aims and evaluation process as a workable model, made a distinction between 'school policy' and 'executive statements'. A school policy statement was described as a brief statement of 'agreed-upon values that will guide the activities of the school', and policy development was 'relatively slow and characterized by a high degree of participative decision making particularly by parents and staff'; the executive statement was a more detailed exercise undertaken by the school staff who would 'transact the broad value orientation or ends-in-view, expressed in the schools' policy, into administrative, curriculum, instructional and evaluative practices', and it would be subject to continuous change. Clearly delineating the roles and responsibilities of the people involved in defining school aims and ensuring their achievement might help school personnel to close the gap between intent and action. All the examples of successful practice described in this section followed up an extensive policy formulation exercise with an equally extensive review of curriculum. It is interesting to note that, despite the Schools Commission's promotion of a reconsideration of organization, the efforts of schools seem to be directed largely towards curriculum review rather than organizational review.

Discipline and Control

Discipline was rated as the third most important organization issue by non-government secondary principals and fourth by government secondary principals in the present study. It emerged from discussions in the school visits that teachers do not always feel comfortable with this issue; as one teacher said, "Teachers don't want to admit problems in this area. It requires a great deal of maturity and understanding of social changes to cope and to maintain the balance of control and freedom'.

Four of the schools visited had tried to deal with this issue in a constructive way.

1 School 5, a government high school, investigated the development of a discipline policy because of concern among staff about what standards to expect of a school population which had changed from rural (with settled conservative outlook) to metropolitan fringe (with a wide variety of social problems). Staff meetings of year groups were held to discuss different types of problem behaviour and the appropriate action for each. A staff committee was appointed to collate recommendations into a Standards of Behaviour document and, despite some initial

staff resistance, to conduct a survey of students in Years 8, 9, and 10 on attitudes to school in general and to rules and misbehaviour in particular. The student survey outcomes were used in the following ways: as an additional source of information for the Standards of Behaviour document; to provide themes for the Year 10 social education courses; to instigate lunchtime activities for students (when two-thirds of the sample said that a reason for getting into trouble was that 'there isn't enough to do at lunchtime'); to modify teacher behaviour in and out of the classroom. The result of one question in particular caused teachers to reflect on their own behaviour: students were given a list of school rules and asked to tick the ones they thought all students should obey. Abuse to property (littering, damage, stealing) was considered by students to be far more important than abuse to the person (violence, verbal abuse); the principal believed that staff unconsciously fostered this attitude because property abuses 'were the things that staff tend to carry on about in school assemblies' whereas abuse to the person 'you don't talk about in assembly because you don't want to put ideas into their heads; you deal with it in private behind closed doors'.

The Standards of Behaviour document had led, teachers believed, to greater unity and confidence of staff, better understanding of students, and closer links with parents on discipline matters (with higher incidence of home visits by teachers and school visits by parents).

2 In another high school, School 6, a teacher was directed by the principal, with the support of the Parents Committee, to develop a discipline policy. Working with the Parents Committee, the teacher circulated a questionnaire to parents, staff, and senior students. Using the survey information as a basis, the staff set themselves three tasks: the gathering of relevant information to provide a description of the school setting; the development of a set of discipline aims and objectives; and the introduction of staff development activities to foster better teacher-student relationships and assist the attainment of objectives. The description of the school setting unearthed new information about the nature of the student population (such as the number of children from one-parent families, and the number of Moslem children and their fast days), which has been formally documented in information sheets about each class in the school; it also identified building location and congestion problems which an outside expert has been brought in to solve. The setting of specific objectives, together with a statement of student and teacher needs, was a lengthier and more difficult task. The teachers found that they were as much in need of discipline as the students. Feedback from the student questionnaire showed staff that above all they needed to set an example to the students. One girl wrote, 'Staff and parents can't demand respect, they have to earn it, and they can't ask us to do things they wouldn't do themselves'; so the staff

set no objectives that they could not or had not achieved themselves. It was this principle that made the finalization of the document a lengthy process, for each of the 26 objectives had to be taken on board by all members of staff as representative of their own beliefs and actions. In conjunction with the statement of objectives and needs, a statement of roles was developed for all teachers in positions of authority. Staff development activities that were planned to help teachers meet the specified student needs and to achieve the discipline objectives focused on verbal and non-verbal communication in the classroom, and on means of enhancing the self-esteem of both teachers and pupils.

3 A social worker at a Catholic boys school, School 7, worked with the teachers of Year 7 students to institute a system of discipline and reward. The discipline procedure constituted 10 steps: from classroom behaviour strategies, through teacher-student discussions, removal of privileges, contact with parents and the use of a daily check sheet, to the final step of suspension. At the same time a merit system was introduced, according to which merits were awarded to students by class teachers for a variety of designated behaviours. At the end of each month Merit Certificates were given to students with 20 merits and the merit scores of these students returned to zero for the next monthly cycle; students with scores of less than 20 carried their scores over to the next month. Staff discussed appropriate strategies to be used for students with few or no merits, focusing on the reasons for low scores and the identification of some behaviour for which a merit could be awarded. The same staff and students were involved in the implementation of a detailed pastoral care program (see later in this chapter), and the social worker expressed some concern that the two modes of control might engender conflict with the co-operative mode of the pastoral care system.

4 School 8, a large country high school, worked out its concern for its beginning students in a different way. In order to find out the best ways to produce positive attitude, behaviour, and knowledge acquisition patterns in students, the school planned to use four different teaching strategies in its 12 first year classes. The strategies were excellence in teaching, parental involvement, and emphasis on essential learning, while the remaining classes were to be used as a control group incorporating the same teaching methods as in the past. The success of the strategy would be evaluated through student and parent surveys and by checking on the number and nature of behaviour referrals.

Three of the schools visited had developed a discipline strategy based on the Glasser method, incorporating a system of negotiation between teacher and student about matters of classroom behaviour, set down in sequential steps culminating in a student's removal to a supervised non-activity situation until a satisfactory negotiation about classroom behaviour was completed with the teacher.

Comment

A decade ago Adams (1970) produced evidence to suggest that, compared with their counterparts in Britain, the United States, and New Zealand, Australian teachers were more authoritarian in their relationships with students and more reliant on regulating classroom behaviour through the use of prescriptive rules. It would be interesting to see if a similar comparative study undertaken today would produce the same results.

In the present study there was, as indicated earlier, a perceived reluctance among some teachers in the schools visited to talk about the issue of discipline and control, perhaps because they felt that the acknowledgment of a need to consider the issue implied a lack of professional competence.

A measure of uncertainty among teachers on the issue of discipline was found in a recent British study (Wilson, 1981) in which the researchers interviewed 1000 parents, teachers, students, and educational administrators. It was reported that teachers felt that

> control was chiefly a matter of being 'stimulating' or 'interesting' and ... that it was somehow their fault if they could not interest the pupils in learning and hence control them. They felt themselves to be, not representatives of impersonal authority, but either possessing or failing to possess the requisite techniques or charisma. (Wilson, 1981:67-68)

The British study, from open-ended discussion with participants, established four models of discipline: (1) obedience to legitimate authority; (2) respect and good behaviour; (3) fraternity and enthusiasm, which involved students wanting to co-operate with adults either because of the good relationship between them or because of the nature of the task itself; and (4) self-discipline. Participants tended to group together the first two models and the last two. Parents and students tended to think of discipline almost entirely in terms of the first two models, teachers were more evenly divided, and educationalists tended more towards the last two models. Parents (and many students) were far more tough-minded than the other two groups about the extent and methods of control that should be exercised by school authorities.

The third OISE survey of public attitudes towards education in Ontario (Livingston and Hart, 1981) included an open-ended question on what the participants (a representative sample of adults 18 years of age and over) felt was the biggest problem facing elementary and high schools. The responses were classified into 18 categories, and the 'lack of discipline' category contained the highest number of responses.

If schools are to give serious consideration to the issue of control and the development of discipline policies, there are lessons to be learnt from the literature and from the experience of other schools: (1) there is a need to involve parents in policy formulation - parents may be more supportive of teachers in this area than teachers themselves imagine; (2) consideration needs to be given to school structure and layout

and the extent to which this impedes or facilitates the smooth day-to-day operation of the school; (3) the enactment of a discipline policy should be based on mutual trust between teachers and students and therefore, in the formulation of policy, consistency of teacher behaviour needs to be taken into account as well as consistency of student behaviour; and (4) as the Wilson study indicated, policy formulators should broaden the concept of discipline and control to include not only obedience and good behaviour, but also co-operation, involvement, and self-discipline.

Co-operation between Educational Institutions

The school practices that exemplified the issue of Alternative Organizational Arrangements were mainly centred around courses in the upper secondary school that were offered as an alternative to the traditional academic courses, and these are described under the issue heading, Preparation for the World of Work. Very few schools in the sample had introduced innovatory programs for the middle school (two exceptions are discussed under Core Curriculum). The remaining 'alternative organizational arrangements' involved the co-operation of staff across educational institutions.

Several secondary schools (Schools 6, 9, and 10) reported links with primary schools, mainly in connection with the transition to secondary school by Year 6 and 7 (depending on the State) students. These links took the form of: visits by secondary teachers to primary schools to talk to students and to gather relevant information about individual students from primary staff; the showing to primary school students of a videotape of school activities made by first-year secondary students; and orientation visits to secondary schools by Year 6 or 7 students which involved, in two schools, the appointment of senior students as future mentors and, in another school, the allocation of two days for each primary student to spend in a Year 8 class. Year 7 teachers in School 11 continued to provide particular care for beginning students right through their first year by allocating a group of eight students to a teacher who assumed the role of guide, tutor, counsellor, and organizer of social activities. A different sort of link between primary and secondary schools was established at School 9 where some Year 9 students went once a week to the local primary school to assist teachers in the infant grades.

In the senior years of the school, contacts were established with tertiary institutions in a variety of ways. Students at a number of secondary schools (Schools 5, 6, 12, 13, and 14) took short-term link courses at nearby technical institutes in a variety of subjects from car mechanics to creative writing to cake-icing. Some principals were critical of tertiary staff in their failure to take the secondary students seriously (suspecting that the technical institutes were more concerned with keeping up their student numbers than providing appropriate experience for secondary students), but

students tended to respond positively to the experience: 'It gave us an idea of what apprentices are expected to do', 'It was worthwhile, I learned so much, and met and talked to a lot of people', 'We made the most of the time knowing it was short, and everyone helped each other'.

Two schools (Schools 7 and 9) offered practical experience to social work and psychology students from tertiary institutions - these students stayed at the schools for a year at a time, playing major parts in the development of pastoral care and transition education programs (more details given under these issue headings). The transition education program involved personnel not only from tertiary institutions but also from other secondary schools.

Comment

Much of the observed co-operation between educational institutions in the study stemmed from the concern of teachers for students during the two major transition periods in their education - transition from primary to secondary school, and from secondary school to work or further education. Students in the final year of primary school were inducted into the secondary school world in a variety of ways, and an increasing number of students from the upper levels of the secondary school were given the opportunity to undertake short courses at technical institutes. The availability of such courses served a dual purpose for schools: it enabled them to broaden their curriculum offering to senior students and to provide students with a 'tertiary study experience' that was analogous to 'work experience'.

A less commonly occurring practice, but one that seemed to have valuable results, was that in which students from one educational level were used to assist in a program of another level: secondary students helped teachers in primary school grades, and tertiary students took part in research and development projects at secondary schools.

Another valuable co-operative practice that is occurring in schools, although not directly observed in this study, involves action research projects undertaken by teachers who wish to look critically at their own practice and develop new curricula with the help of staff from tertiary institutions who act as facilitators. A national seminar on action research was held at Deakin University in 1981, and the Teachers as Evaluators Project has had an impact, since its inception in 1977, on schools in all States and all educational systems (see Grundy and Kemmis, 1981; Hughes et al., 1980).

Assessment and Credentials

Assessment was not given a high priority by principals in the survey but enough comments were made about assessment during school visits (mostly in relation to other

issues) to warrant the inclusion of this issue under a separate heading.

School 15 was developing a core curriculum for Years 7-10 and found that its old style of reporting attitude and achievement marks was inappropriate for the new curriculum. An inservice day was held on approaches to assessment, followed up by a series of faculty meetings. The issue was still not finally resolved at the time of the school visit but staff were moving towards descriptive assessment and detailed reporting on skill development. Meetings were instituted within year levels to discuss students' progress across subject areas, so that each teacher had an overview of all students at that level.

In another school that introduced a core curriculum in the arts area (School 1) the staff working in the area developed their own reporting system which included both descriptive assessment and marks; this was done as part of an attempt to achieve a status for the arts subjects that was equivalent to that of other subjects in the eyes of other teachers, students, and parents. Most of the students at the school came from non-English-speaking backgrounds, and their parents placed great importance on tangible evidences of education such as homework and marks. The reporting system helped to convince students as well as their parents that the multi-arts subjects were to be taken as seriously as other subjects.

The importance of tangible evidence of progress was mentioned in another context in School 10 in relation to its reading program in Year 7. The teacher in charge of the program introduced a card system to mark the students' unit-by-unit progress: 'I get a bit of criticism for it, but it's a system that has worked in the primary school for years. It's just starting to come into the secondary school and the kids just love it'. She employed a modified star system: when students finished a unit of work it was coloured in red on the card; when seven units were completed the student were given a certificate, and after fourteen units a free book.

The 'tangible evidence' was also considered to be important in two transition education programs (for Year 10 and Year 11 students). Like the initiator of the reading program just described, the teachers of the program in School 12 believed that students responded well to 'awards and rewards' and issued special reports or certificates for every activity undertaken by the student; at the completion of the program these were assembled in a folder for the student to use as a reference when seeking employment. The organizer of the transition program in School 6 felt it was important to incorporate continuing assessment (of both attitude and achievement) into the program in order to measure a student's progress, not in relation to other students but in relation to that student's earlier performance. The teacher felt that evidence of even slight improvements helped her students, who came into the program with an overwhelming sense of personal and academic failure.

Comment

In 1981 the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association undertook a survey of 120 secondary schools on staff opinion of student assessment, and produced the following findings (Grant, 1981:21): (1) assessment was not a real issue in many schools; (2) of the different forms of assessment (descriptive, letter grades, numerical marks, and combinations of these), descriptive assessment alone was used in 24 per cent of the schools, descriptive and letter grades together were used in 55 per cent of the schools, and no school used only numerical marks; (3) in 70 per cent of schools the assessment policy was derived from consensus between principal and staff, rather than by principal alone or principal in consultation with staff; and (4) in 75 per cent of schools no consultation on assessment policy occurred between staff and school council, and in over 60 per cent of schools no consultation with parents occurred at all. All these findings were in accord with the observations made on assessment procedures in the course of the present study: assessment was not a high priority for the principals in the survey, but where the development of an assessment policy was an issue it was a joint principal and staff venture without consultation with parents, and most assessment procedures incorporated both descriptive assessment and grades. In addition, staff in the schools visited stressed the importance of developing assessment procedures that were suited to the purpose of the task in hand. This type of procedure has been termed 'democratic goal-based assessment' by McRae (1981) who, despite the ethos of competive assessment that surrounds Year 12 in Victoria, developed a Group 2 accredited Senior English course for Year 12 students which used an assessment procedure that was continuous, diagnostic, and participatory - participatory in that both students and teachers accepted the responsibility for assessment; certification was presented in the form of a descriptive statement of achievement of the course goals, and 'failure' was only possible if the student did not complete the course. Blachford (1981:19), in a review of assessment procedures, stated that 'at least for the period of compulsory education, compulsory failure should be replaced by assessment that should assist all students to reach attainable goals'. This is in line with the Schools Commission's (1980) assertion that every student should be positively expected to succeed, an aim that was carried through in all the Transition Education programs observed in the present study and incorporated in their assessment procedures.

School Autonomy

The principle of devolution of responsibility for policy formulation and curriculum development to the school level and the involvement of the whole school community in this process has been a cornerstone of the Schools Commission's philosophy from its inception in 1974, but not all schools appear to have taken up this challenge. In both the

questionnaire descriptions and the schools visited it was rare to find examples of the sustained interactive involvement of all sectors of the school community (teachers, students and parents) in curriculum development or policy formulation although there were, of course, many examples of joint involvement in the organization of social or fund-raising activities.

The efforts of schools to promote wider school-community involvement seemed to concentrate on one particular sector, and this is how the practices are described in the following paragraphs. Practices that were identified under the School and Community issue heading ('The broadening of the base of school operation to allow for interaction between the school and the community') are also included.

Staff participation. There were three government high schools in which the principal had made a conscious effort to include all staff in the decision-making processes of the school. In School 5 there were two meetings a week of the policy and curriculum committees; these groups were composed of senior staff plus any others who wanted to attend, and teachers were gradually learning to use this system in an active rather than a passive way. In School 17, before the present principal arrived, there had been one information-giving (from principal to staff) session a fortnight, but currently there were staff meetings of various kinds every night of the week, so that 'everyone is informed and involved and communicating well with each other'. The decision-making process at School 18 was truly democratic in that the principal used no power of veto over staff decisions; his attitude was, 'I'm dealing with professional people and they will make a professional decision', although, as his staff would happily tell you, he was a powerful debator skilled in the art of persuasion. One member of staff commented, 'A lot of schools have so-called democratic decision-making processes, but they really have short circuits built into them. Here the process is really worked though'. The decisions were made in the fortnightly meetings of the staff council, a group of 25 which had representatives from each faculty. The weekly staff meeting was used to bring forward issues for discussion or to ratify staff council decisions and for information giving. In a State where the average staff turnover was two and a half years, the majority of teachers who joined the staff in the early years of this school's operation (it started in 1973) were still there in 1982, which is some indication of teacher satisfaction with the school's mode of operation.

Parent and community participation. Parent and community input into the secondary school curriculum was very limited in the schools visited, except in the area of transition education. In the development of these courses, advice was frequently sought and taken from people working outside the school concerning the range of relevant subjects and suitable content for various components of the subjects.

There were signs that school councils (with parent, teacher, and community

representation) were devoting more time to the discussion of educational issues in addition to the usual administrative and financial matters - on the past year's council agenda at School 19 had appeared such policy issues as the introduction of new languages, discipline, the nature of the student intake, and the orientation of the Year 10 program.

School 18 showed a high degree of teacher involvement in the decision-making process (described at the end of the previous section), but the involvement of parents was minimal, and three recent school council meetings had lacked a quorum; one teacher at the school explained that, while there was a common core of agreement among staff, there was not the same agreement among parents - 'They don't really know what they want or what their role should be'. Whether such seeming indecisiveness was from lack of parent interest or lack of teacher encouragement was impossible to determine. In some schools with a high percentage of parents from non-English-speaking backgrounds, school personnel found it difficult to involve parents in the school: 'A lot of our parents come from cultures where you only come to school if your kid's in trouble, so they don't enjoy coming here'. In an attempt to break down this kind of barrier, the principal of School 20 had invited five parents to a staff curriculum planning day where small group discussion was used - the parents attended with reluctance, but they found they were able to make a contribution to the discussion, and consequently supported the idea of more parent involvement in future inservice days.

The principal of School 7, a Catholic school in a declared area of disadvantage, was concerned about the lack of parent participation in the operation of the school, and he instituted a parent involvement program, starting from the premise that 'tuck shop duty and fund-raising is not parent involvement'. Surveys of teachers and parents were undertaken to find areas of mutual agreement on the ways parents could be involved. A few parents were selected to interview other parents and to use the interview as an educative situation because 'the notion of parents being involved in the decision-making process of a school was completely foreign to them'. As a result of the surveys and subsequent discussions, parents and teachers agreed that a tutoring program in mathematics and English should be set up with parents supervising small groups or individual students. Parents also helped the school social worker with interpreting, helped on excursions and in pastoral care activities, attended staff inservice days, and made submissions to the Disadvantaged Schools Program. A catering club was formed for parents with little command of English to become involved by providing refreshments for parents taking part in other activities. The 50 parents who helped in these various ways met together every two months to share their experiences.

Student participation. The principle of student involvement in decision making was supported by many of the schools visited, but in practice it was found to be difficult to implement. Several schools had elected student representatives on staff committees

and school councils, but student attendance at meetings tended to dwindle away as the year progressed - 'They find it boring and a bit intimidating'. The key to the problem seemed to be to get students to identify with the group. One way in which this had been achieved (at a country school in which one of the principals had previously taught) was by having equal representation of staff and students on the committee, with members taking it in turns to chair the meetings.

One of the Independent schools visited (School 21) had a Staff Student Council with 20 student members elected by students in year groups, four staff members elected by staff, and a chairperson elected by the whole school. Fortnightly meetings of year groups were held to discuss issues, and decisions were taken by the representatives to the Council for further discussion and recommendations to the principal. The issues discussed ranged from broadening the range of culture and leisure activities available to the wearing of ear-rings (the girls could, so why not the boys?).

Students at the senior college of a Catholic school (School 22) instigated the abolition of the prefect system and replaced it with a Student Executive of about 30 volunteer members which held monthly meetings to discuss issues and to organize sub-committees and activities. At the beginning of each year the student members went to a leadership camp where they undertook exercises in values clarification, self-knowledge, school needs and leadership roles.

There was only one school (School 23) in which students had more than a token or fragmented input into decision making on curriculum matters. It was a telephone-contact school where the principal had arranged for students not staff to discuss the school practices described in the questionnaire. All decisions in the school on curriculum aims and content were made jointly by students and teachers which, according to the students, sustained student interest and involvement in school work and developed self-sufficiency.

At one country school (School 24) a student-initiated program involved the participation of students, teachers, parents and community members in the development of a major community resource over a period of three years. The idea originally came from some Year 11 geography students who, in the course of doing a mapping exercise of the school grounds, found a reclaimed swamp area not being put to any use. With school and town council support and a government grant, students, teachers and parents laid out a combined sweat track and BMX bike track surrounded with a log fence and native shubbery, for which they won the APEX Advance Australia award for student-initiated programs. With the award money they planned to proceed with the next two stages of the project on the reclaimed property - the construction of an open-air amphitheatre for school and community use, and the setting up of a barbecue area for the use of the old people in the geriatric units in adjacent hospital grounds.

Comment

The definition of School Autonomy in the questionnaire to principals was 'the acceptance of responsibility for policy formulation and/or curriculum development by the school community'. In the schools visited there were many examples of such acceptance of responsibility, but generally not as a broadly co-operative endeavour. Different roles were adopted by the various sectors of the school community: staff were frequently involved in policy formulation and curriculum development; parents were sometimes involved in policy decisions but seldom in curriculum decisions; and students had little more than a token involvement in either area.

Despite frequent Schools Commission pronouncements, it is apparent that the practice of collaborative school and community-based decision making is still not widespread in Australia. Hunt, in a study of curriculum and the community, commented:

> The present situation in Australia suggests that although there is widespread freedom for schools to develop curricula more relevant to their communities few schools have invited parents or other community members to share decision making with them to any great extent. (Hunt, 1979:5)

Although the practice of parent and community involvement is not widespread, the principle of such involvement has been given increasing support over recent years from groups other than parents organizations and the Schools Commission. An Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) conference in 1980 recommended:

> The trade union movement should develop policies and approaches on a wide range of educational issues ... parents should have paid leave to attend to their children's education, to carry out the functions of school councils and to act as resource people in school curriculum. (ACTU, 1980:4)

State Governments have given considerable attention to the devolution of responsibility to school councils - the Minister for Education in Victoria, for instance, has made the following statements in recent ministerial papers:

> The Government is firmly committed to the implementation, rather than the rhetoric, of devolution and broader participation ... parents, teachers, students, principals, administrators, and others closely involved in the work of education will all have the right to participate in decision-making processes. (Victoria, Education Department, 1983a:7)
>
> The Government intends that school councils will decide the major directions of the school program by their involvement in the determination of curriculum objectives, the use of resources available to the school and in broad organizational policies. (Victoria, Education Department, 1983b:6)

Several researchers have warned of dangers to be avoided in the operation of the new school councils. Edwards (1982:12) proposed a clear statement of definition and purpose for councils to avoid 'strategies developed for local participation (which) have distinct limits drawn so that power still resides at the centre despite an illusion of local responsibility'. Pettit (1980:199) warned of the danger of 'relying solely upon legal

devolution to local representative groups through formal structures' because power could be seized by those most used to formal decision making and responsibility would not be truly shared. He emphasized that not one of the groups that composed the school community had a monopoly of wisdom: 'On their own, neither teachers, administrators, academics, industrialists, parents nor students are capable of deciding the ends and means of learning' (Pettit, 1980:195).

Various ways of ensuring parent and community involvement in schools have been discussed in the literature and observed in this study, but little research or discussion seems to have been devoted to ways of bringing about effective student involvement in decision making. Comments made by teachers during the school visits, and personal observation, would suggest three possible pre-conditions necessary to ensure real student involvement.

1 Students must not be swamped by the structure - equal representation with other school community members on a small committee would engender more confidence and commitment than the usual ratio of one or two students on a council with 20 members.

2 Students should be given a clear area of responsibility and authority - they are less likely to take this role seriously and think through the implications of their decisions if they know that any decision can be dismissed out of hand by the administration.

3 A selective involvement is preferable to a blanket involvement, an involvement in areas that are of direct relevance and interest to students - and this is broader than just school dances and spellathons, just as the areas of parent involvement should be broader than canteen duty and fetes.

The tendency has been to think of student involvement in terms of representation on school, staff, or student councils, where the principal concern is with broad policy and general school activities. Some schools (such as School 23 in the present study) have adopted a policy of student involvement in curricular decision making; this type of involvement can meet all three preconditions outlined above. For instance, approximately 40 secondary schools in Victoria offer an accredited alternative Year 12 course (the Secondary Teachers Certificate) in which students are able to negotiate curricular content and approach with staff: thus, in terms of the three preconditions, students are not swamped by the structure because they are all involved in the process; they assume total responsibility for fulfilling a negotiated contract; and the agreed-upon curriculum negotiated in this way is likely to be of relevance and interest to the participating students.

The key figure in determining the success of collaborative decision-making

processes in the school is probably the principal, who has the dual responsibility of supervising the internal operations of the school and linking the school to its environment. It is the principal who can see the curriculum from a total school perspective, who can facilitate and integrate activities and initiatives within the school, and who can create supportive structures to enable the implementation of decisions.

Pastoral Care

The largest difference between government and non-government school principals in the Organization section of the questionnaire was in response to the issue of pastoral care. This difference was reflected in the nine case study schools that described school practices concerned with this issue - seven of the nine were non-government schools. In all these schools, pastoral care had been the subject of policy discussions and decisions followed by organizational changes which mostly took the form of regular time slots in the time-table for meetings of pastoral care groups.

Although it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions on the basis of such small numbers, it should be noted that the two government schools structured their pastoral care groups on a year-level basis while the non-government school groups were structured across year levels. One school (School 20) had changed from a single to a multiple year-level structure.

> We felt that the stratification into year groups made the year levels ignorant of each other, and Year 10s would tread on Year 7s or 8s and not recognize them as equal people. Since changing the structure there has been a discernible increase in the number of friendly contacts between year levels.

In all schools the decision to form pastoral care groups was made in an attempt to do something tangible to counteract perceived feelings of alienation among the student population and to strengthen feelings of co-operation and caring between teacher and student, and between student and student. It was felt that the creation of a formalized pastoral care structure in the school would be more effective than just relying on individual teachers to establish supportive relationships with students. The major problem seemed to lie in the very different ways that teachers handled their pastoral care groups. In few of the schools visited had the staff been given any outside help or training in their pastoral care roles - it tended to be a matter of learning through trial and error, backed by peer support and discussion. Some teachers found it difficult to reconcile their roles 'as someone for kids to confide in as well as someone to keep them in line'. The potential danger was that the pastoral care group would become merely an administrative convenience if not handled properly. This situation was described by one school principal as follows:

> In some groups it's just mark the roll, give out messages, sit and look at each other for ten minutes.

The time factor seemed to be a critical one in determining the success of pastoral care groups: a period of 20-30 minutes seemed to be necessary to ensure that something other than administrative tasks would be undertaken by the group. One school held 20-minute meetings every day, others had 10-minute meetings every morning plus one or two half-hour sessions during the week.

In one of the government schools (School 17) there was one teacher to a group of about 12 students at the same year level; one of the two extended pastoral care sessions was used for group discussion or games and the other for a 'treat', such as going to a restaurant. One teacher commented that the pastoral care sessions had 'really lifted the morale of the kids': she had a group from mixed ethnic backgrounds, and found, for instance, that the four Vietnamese students in her group, who were extremely reserved, responded well to two things, food and basketball, which it was easy to incorporate regularly into pastoral care sessions. In the other government school (School 13) small groups of six students were assigned to each teacher.

> We felt there was a gap between teachers and kids - it was Them versus Us. Now with the small groups meeting regularly the kids feel they have someone they can turn to, and we can talk together about the reasons behind staff decisions.

In the non-government Independent schools the mixed year-level pastoral care groups were called houses, a carryover from the days of intra-school sports competitions but operating now on an entirely different basis, trying to meet the emotional, social, and academic needs of the children as well as their sporting needs. The principal of School 25 commented that it had been widely accepted in primary school that the teacher should act as a parent substitute to facilitate socialization at school but that 'in secondary school it has been assumed that you can sink or swim, which is not right, because this is the age when there is the greatest distance between parent and child, so there is a need for a parent substitute with whom a child can relate'. The parent role in the mixed level groups was often taken up by senior students as well as teachers: 'As kids have gone through the system you can see the benefits - the older ones really reach out to the younger ones, get to know them and reassure them'. The groups in this particular school were encouraged to do things together: one group took three years to raise the money to buy a school bus, and another planted and cared for a windbreak of trees around the tennis courts.

The house groups in the Independent schools varied in size from 25-60, and the teacher-student ratio was the same as in the government school pastoral care groups, with one teacher to about 12 students. In some schools the position of house leader or counsellor carried with it a financial and time allowance. Constant calls were certainly made on the house leader's time apart from the time-tabled sessions. In Schools 19 and 21, for instance, the house leader had to make time available for planning group session discussions, undertaking personal counselling, advising on subject choices, monitoring

academic progress, and contacting or being contacted by parents. The house system was regarded as a support system for families; as well as using the house leader as a direct and accessible contact point at the school for any academic or social problem, families joined in house activities such as visits to sports centres, camps, and dinners. A student at School 19 said:

> The house system is really good because you get involved with students from every year level, and there's a strong relationship between staff and students. It's very helpful for new students. The teachers care more about kids here than at the other school I went to - they're interested in what you want to know and what you want to do, and you can talk to them about any personal problems you have. They are like second parents.

School 7 housed a social work team which was approached in 1979 by the Catholic Education Office to carry out a survey of counselling and guidance practices in the 66 systemic schools of the Archdiocese; the team undertook the study with a broader term of reference, covering all aspects of pastoral care. The principal researcher found that there was a gap in the schools between expressed principle ('We are a Catholic school, ipso facto we are very involved in pastoral care') and actual practice; a minority of schools had systematic pastoral care programs, and few schools had trained guidance and counselling personnel. Over a period of two years, the researchers gathered and collated their information then organized a series of discussion sessions with people from the survey schools so that they could look at the strengths and weaknesses of their own pastoral care programs and put forward recommendations to the Catholic Education Office. The focus of the recommendations was on the development of school-based pastoral care programs with help from consultants. As a result the Catholic Education Office funded ten schools to carry out pilot studies of the consultancy and school-based development model of pastoral care. The research report contained an outline of procedures involved in the development of school-based pastoral care. The basic procedure headings listed were:

1 development of a philosophy and set of aims for pastoral care;
2 development of staff commitment to school-based pastoral care;
3 development of a pastoral care structure with three tiers (grass roots, middle management, overall co-ordination);
4 clarification of roles;
5 development of a pastoral care program;
6 development of clearly defined referral system;
7 programmed review meetings.

The optional procedure headings listed were:

1 linking pastoral care to a modular teaching program;
2 integration of pastoral care structure with the student council;

3 development of peer counselling;

4 development of systematic liaison with feeder schools;

5 development of a student information recording system;

6 development of systematic school-family contact;

7 linking pastoral care structure to extra-curricular activities;

8 development of the role of the school counsellor as a pastoral care consultant.

The school in which the social work research team was based was one of the ten pilot study schools. A series of meetings was held with staff and a survey was undertaken of students in Years 5-10. As a result a pastoral care program was planned for introduction in Year 7, based on themes such as decision making, relationships, rule setting, and self-awareness. A set of guidelines was drawn up for each theme, covering aims, sequence, activities, and materials. The overall aims of the program were:

1 to enable pastoral care leaders and their groups of students to get to know each other better in a less structured situation than normal lessons;

2 to allow the pastoral care leader to develop his/her role as caring adult as well as teacher in the school community;

3 to provide an arena for the discussion of issues and the development of personal skills which are important to the boys.

The behavioural objectives of the program were:

1 to raise the self-confidence of individual boys;

2 to teach skills in

communicating with other effectively,
developing trust,
making decisions,
resolving conflicts,
leadership,
expressing concerns and feelings to adults and peers effectively.

The program was introduced for one term in 1982, and was due to be evaluated at the end of the year before embarking on a whole-year program in 1983 with possible extensions to the Year 8 level.

Comment

One of the cornerstones of the Youth Policy outlined by Karmel (1979) was a system of pastoral care for young people. This caring role was one that emerged as important in the surveys of student opinion about school mentioned in Chapter 1 (Anderson et al., 1980; Campbell and Robinson, 1979; Fawns and Tease, 1980; and Meade, 1981). For instance, topics discussed with students in Years 10 and 12 in the Anderson study

included examinations, organization, curriculum, teachers, and discipline, but the researchers found that 'there was an overwhelming preoccupation with teachers. The greater part of this concern was about how teachers relate to their students' (Anderson et al., 1980:3).

A study of the quality of school life for students in seven schools (Batten and Girling-Butcher, 1981:59) reported the following findings:

> Not only in the learning acquisition domains (where it might have been expected) but also in the social development domains (where it would not have been expected), the influence of teachers predominated over the influence of peers. The quality of life for students in schools depended on, more than anything else, the relationship between teachers and students.

The characteristics of the teacher's role seen as most important by students in the above study were encouragement in the learning situation and a concern for all students. Travelling around Australia talking to 15 and 16 year-old students, representatives of the Schools Commission found that 'in general student concern is to find in schools the support which will confirm their value as individuals and recognize them as people who count' (Schools Commission, 1980:8).

A report published in English as part of a series of studies of aspects of organization in the secondary school, included the following statement on pastoral care:

> The thesis of this book is that what we have come to call pastoral care is the essence of a school, and that the structuring of the school is the key to its success ... The paradox of the school is that never before has close pastoral care been so important for the total well-being of pupils and society, and yet never before has it been so difficult to establish the best pattern of care. (Marland, 1974: 204,227)

This statement is supported by the findings of the present study. Both principals and teachers expressed a great deal of concern for the pastoral care of their students. But, as Marland found, expressions of concern from individual teachers did not necessarily produce a caring school - to achieve that end it seemed to be necessary to link pastoral care to school structure and curriculum. The schools that were making some impact in the area of pastoral care had introduced pastoral care programs (that incorporated care for the personal, academic and social development of students) as time-tabled periods, and had restructured classes and year levels to produce more appropriate sizes and mixtures of student groups for the pastoral care sessions. In addition these schools had well-established counselling and guidance services. As far as the programs themselves were concerned, the most effective ones (from teachers' and students' points of view) seemed to be those that time-tabled a couple of sessions a week of about 30 minutes' duration which had a planned and varied format, and ones which established teacher-student relationships that enabled students to approach teachers at any time with any problem.

The survey of principals showed that pastoral care was more important to non-government than government principals, and most of the pastoral care programs observed in the schools visited were in non-government schools. It would seem that non-government schools have a strong tradition of pastoral care and, perhaps because of their greater autonomy, they are more able than government schools to adapt their structures to accommodate new practices in this area.

A Committee of Inquiry into pupil behaviour and discipline in schools undertaken in New South Wales in 1980 suggested that the area of pastoral care was one in which schools from the two sectors could profitably work together.

> From our visits it is clear that there are staff members in government and non-government schools who could make a valuable contribution in these areas. In particular there are experienced staff at independent and Catholic systemic schools with long established pastoral care programs, and consultants employed by the Department of Education in the areas of personal development and pupil welfare who could readily assist schools. We believe that there would be advantages in the two sectors working together in this matter, each has different strengths and one would learn from the other. (New South Wales, Committee of Inquiry, 1980:51)

CHAPTER 6

ASPECTS OF CURRICULUM

The issue headings that were used from the Curriculum section were Basic Skills, Core Curriculum, and Preparation for the World of Work. The practices that appear under the last-named heading mainly comprise transition education programs and alternative courses for Years 10-12, which seem to fit better under this heading than under any other although they do provide information about other issues such as Development of Personal Identity, Leisure Education, Special Social Competencies, and all the Skills issues. Although the issue of Moral Education was of paramount importance to non-government principals in the survey, there were few manifestations evident in the schools visited other than traditional scripture lessons or attendance at chapel, but some pastoral care programs did incorporate aspects of Moral Education. Technology in Education was an issue of particular importance to principals of secondary government schools but, because it was rarely included in descriptions of school practice, it could not be further investigated. This outcome may reflect the fact that, although there has been a groundswell of interest in technological education in the schools themselves, educational administrators have been slow to respond in a tangible way to such interest. The recent support for development in this area is coming from political and other sources outside the educational system.

Basic Skills

The development of basic skills was a more important issue to primary than to secondary school principals, but it was still a high priority issue in secondary schools, and a number of schools visited had created structures that attempted to solve literacy and numeracy problems, with particular emphasis on the former. The practices discussed under this heading often ranged beyond the area of basic skills to cover other issues such as communication skills, development of personal identity, and pastoral care.

Programs for first-year students. Two government high schools operated specific programs for their first-year students. At School 26 all incoming students were screened in consultation with the feeder primary schools, and those with reading difficulties were offered special help in the three periods a week otherwise allotted to foreign language study. Thirty parent volunteers were trained by the resources teacher to act as helpers on a one-to-one basis with students. The 'helping' role involved pastoral care as well - 'It seems that what the kids need more than scholastic counselling is encouragement and a feeling of security'. In School 27 a theme-based program operated, taken by the form teacher for half the weekly time allotment, with evaluation and contact with parents at the end of each six-week unit. The low achievers (identified with the help of the primary

schools) were put in classes half the size of the average achievers' classes to enable more individual help to be given with skills development. After this year of individual instruction, students from the smaller classes were absorbed into other classes.

Learning support. School 18 ran three programs available to students throughout the school. A Learning Assistance Program was initiated by the school counsellor and run by a teacher aide with 20 helpers (from a 20-year-old to a grandfather) who were matched with students needing help, not only with school work but with social development - 'We have kids in the L.A.P. who are potential troublemakers. The program probably makes them more successful academically, and certainly makes them far more successful socially'. The second source of help came from two special education teachers who had their own specially equipped room and worked there and in normal classes, working intensively with non-achievers. The third program involved three experienced teachers who devoted two-thirds of their time to providing long- or short-term support in and out of the classroom for any student.

The three schemes were instigated when the special classes for slow learners - which had created more social problems than resolved learning problems - had been abolished and students integrated into other classes. The perceived advantages of the present scheme were the avoidance of 'separating out', the lack of coercion, and the provision of choice for students between the three approaches.

Reading Program. In School 16, all students in Years 7 to 9 were given two reading periods a week and all Year 10 students one period a week. Year 7 students undertook an intensive five-stage individualized reading program in an attractive and magnificently equipped reading centre run by the reading teacher with assistance from class teachers. As well as a vast array of books, students were offered (on a progressive core and options basis) word puzzles, dictionary games, cassettes, origami, living skills, grammar cards, crosswords, reading kits and tutor systems - all chosen to promote the underlying philosophy of the scheme, that 'reading should be an enjoyable pastime which makes sense'. Reading periods for students in Years 8-10 involved supervised silent reading in two specially equipped classrooms; the aim in these three years was to develop the reading habit, building on the skills acquired in Year 7. The classes were supervised by teachers from different subject areas. Other support services were offered: remedial work using withdrawal and whole class approaches for Years 8 and 9; a parent-tutor service for pupils from Years 7 to 10 (working with pairs or individuals); and time specifically allocated for reading/language across the curriculum. The reading teacher had encountered some initial resistance to involvement in the program from staff in subject areas other than English, but this was dissipated after the reading teacher put staff through a series of practical exercises designed to sensitize them to language and reading hazards in all subjects, particularly in science subjects using textbooks that

required tertiary level reading skills. The reading teacher gave help with textbook evaluation and devised subject-related reading and comprehension exercises for teachers to use with their classes. To the observer, the response of staff and students to the reading program in the school was clearly positive.

Comment

As discussed in Chapter 1, there have been repeated demands over recent years for a 'return to the basics', for increased emphasis to be given in schools to the basic skills of reading, writing, and computation. These demands have come from Ministers of Education as well as the man in the street, and individual views are supported by public opinion surveys, such as those conducted in South Australia and New South Wales.

> Training in the 'basic competencies' of writing, expression and figuring is unanimously considered to be an important responsibility of schools. (Dunne, 1978:78)
>
> The public at large lists the teaching of basic skills as a prime objective for schools. (Baumgart, 1980:49)

The call for increased emphasis on the teaching of basic skills was usually linked to complaints about declining standards, although defenders of today's educational standards have taken great delight in finding records of similar complaints made 50 and 100 years ago. The Australian Studies in Student Performance Project (Bourke et al., 1981) involved the administration of similar or identical tests in the basic skills to a national sample of 10 and 14 year-old students in 1975 and 1980; the researchers found that standards had been maintained, and in some areas (such as newspaper reading and basic computation) the students in 1980 scored significantly higher than their counterparts in 1975.

Both the survey outcomes and the observations of school practice made in the present study seem to indicate that schools do take this area of learning seriously and are making concerted, and successful, efforts to remedy the problems that do exist. The most effective programs tended to be in schools where all students were involved in a program (such as the reading program in School 16) or where students with learning problems were offered several alternative types of assistance (such as at School 18). In many of the programs the psychological support provided by the teachers or resource people was just as important to the student as the academic assistance given. Blackburn (1981:88) suggests that the teaching of basic skills in our schools today needs to incorporate a wider range of abilities than in the past.

> If we want young people to be able to cope with the kind of society we now have, and with a future already in important respects unlike the recent past, we need to place more emphasis on the basic skills of resourcefulness, co-operativeness, problem solving, and independence, as well as those of literacy, numeracy, and calculation.

Core Curriculum

Although only 27 per cent of secondary school principals in the survey rated core curriculum as an important issue, it is included here because two of the schools visited had successfully planned and implemented curricular restructuring of this kind, which seemed to go some way towards meeting the Schools Commission's challenge for a 'fundamental reappraisal of the approach to the compulsory years of schooling'. School 15 undertook a total curriculum change for Years 7-10; School 1 developed a multi-arts core curriculum for Year 7-10.

A multi-arts program. The impetus for the program came from the principal (an art/craft teacher) and a senior home economics teacher in a new school run along traditional lines. Because of the traditional approach to the curriculum, the developers of the Multi-Arts Program had to, in their own words, 'go out on a limb to establish the core curriculum'. Nine staff members were involved in the program (many of them in their first year of teaching) and all students in Years 7-10; the subject areas covered in the four-year course of study were art, drama, graphics, home economics, media studies, textiles, and woodwork, and the courses were based on a six-week unit system with core and options. The program had been operating for several years, with teachers meeting weekly for curriculum planning and development; in addition, outside experts were consulted and other schools visited. The program was regularly evaluated by staff and adapted on the basis of staff and student suggestions. The nine teachers operated as a faculty, with a block allocation of periods so that they could arrange their own time-table, staffing, and course content.

One of the initial problems faced by the teachers in the development of the core curriculum was:

> People saw the Arts curriculum as separate sections (Year 8, Year 9 etc.) and kids could end up with limited or repeated experience. So one of the first things we did was say 'This is a four year course', and this conceptual difference took a lot of getting used to.

The distinguishing features of the Multi-Arts Program were seen by the developers to be 'the continuity of curriculum from Years 7-10, greater freedom of choice for students than was usual in an arts program, and the developmental and experimental approach adopted in each subject area'.

The exercise of planning and implementing the course had positive outcomes for the teachers involved. They developed a sense of identity with and belief in their own program, and the challenging nature of the co-operative endeavour developed in them a higher degree of professionalism: 'When you're working with other people you need to think at a different level of sophistication about what you're doing and why you're doing it'. The core-curriculum approach of the Multi-Arts Program had proved its worth to

other subject faculties after several years of successful operation, and the science faculty was considering a similar type of reappraisal and restructuring of the science curriculum for Years 7 to 10.

The students took a while to accommodate to the new curriculum. Used to compulsory subjects in the early secondary years, they found the concept of choice confusing, and tended to select subjects according to which staff member they liked and what their friends were doing; choices also tended to be sex-determined. Gradually the students learned to make real choices and to follow through personal interests and abilities. The course was adapted to encourage boys and girls to participate equally in subjects - for instance in textiles, previously a 'girls' subject', embroidery and patchwork were abandoned and replaced by stretch-sewing (of wind-cheaters and T-shirts) and spinning (acceptable to boys of European origin because this was something their fathers did as well as their mothers). The status of the subjects changed over time in another way: initially the students thought of the units as 'Mickey Mouse' subjects because they were short-term and 'non-academic' but, as the program developed its own identity and sense of continuity and its own reporting system, it became accepted by students, and by their parents, as being on equal terms with other subjects - and as a consequence the quality of the work improved.

A core curriculum for Years 7-10. In 1979, newly appointed senior administrators in this Catholic school set up a curriculum committee which conducted a survey of parents, students and ex-students to elicit reactions to the present curriculum and to make an assessment of needs. As a result, the decision was made to introduce a new Year 7-10 curriculum, with a common group of subjects in Years 7-9 and a transition to core and electives in Year 10.

The first task undertaken by the Curriculum Committee was to examine the subject syllabuses for the four years in order to identify knowledge gaps and to check continuity. Gaps were found in areas such as human relationships, consumer education, political and legal literacy, and conservation issues. The Committee tried to identify what was essential for students by Year 10 to know and experience, and drew up a draft document based on the publication by Piper (1977) and the work done in the area by the Curriculum Development Centre and the Victorian Education Department. The eight areas of specific content were: Art and Craft; Mathematics; Environmental Studies; Social, Cultural and Civic Studies; Health Education; Science and Technology; Communications and Work; and Leisure and Lifestyle. The ninth CDC area, Moral Values and Reasoning, was expressed in terms of learning processes, because it was seen as an area that should permeate the whole curriculum.

The draft document was discussed with staff and with parents, and was sent to 15 outside groups or individuals for comment, then adapted accordingly. Each of the nine areas of learning in the core curriculum was allocated to a subject faculty for detailed

development; each faculty co-ordinator had to justify the developed aims, rationale, and content of the relevant area before a representative staff committee. The program was implemented in 1982; during the year monthly meetings were held for course review or preparation, and an evaluation was planned for the end of the year.

Student reaction to the course in the short time it had been operational was positive - because of the broader and more relevant range of curricular offerings, and because of an allied thrust by staff (as a consequence of the 1979 survey) to establish closer and more interactive relationships with students.

Parents also reacted positively to the broader curriculum and welcomed the accompanying abandonment of streaming. The new approach to curriculum development initially encountered some staff resistance; subsequently some teachers left, and others became convinced of a need for change when the survey results were published. Working out ways of co-operation and co-ordination within and between faculties was a useful staff development exercise for teachers who were unused to thinking outside their own subject areas. Over the two years of planning the core curriculum, teachers gradually acquired the confidence and skills to take an active part in the real decision-making process.

Comment

Core curriculum was defined in the principals questionnaire as 'the development of a set of learning experiences that should be acquired by all students as a basis for personal development and social participation'. Thus the term 'core curriculum' implied more than just a list of compulsory subjects. The guideline paper prepared by the Curriculum Development Centre on core curriculum discussed this distinction.

> To simply list the subjects is to miss one vital requirement of core curriculum, namely that subject matter, teaching-learning processes and learning situations should be organized around a set of aims, principles and values which relate to the defined characteristics and major needs of contemporary society and all youth. (CDC, 1980:13)

The paper also refers to the importance of the interrelationship of learning across the curriculum. This was one of the features of the two core curriculum programs observed in the present study: the interrelationship of learning was examined and developed both across subject areas and across year levels, so that the learning acquired by students was both integrated and sequential. The planning required in the two schools to ensure the interrelationship of learning in those two ways led in turn to detailed consideration of learning processes and content areas.

Preparation for the World of Work

This issue was of great importance to the secondary school principals in the survey, and

14 of the 27 schools chosen for further investigation were attempting to do something for their students that went beyond the provision of work experience and access to link courses.

Less than a decade ago, the idea of extending career education to include work experience for students was seen as an exciting innovation, but in the years that followed, the potential of the work experience concept was not always realized, as one teacher explained:

> The kids love it, but I'm not sure what the end product is - it's terrific for kids to get a sense of what it's like to go to work and I can understand their delight in doing it, but I'm not sure of the overall value. It's a bit like going on a holiday - you come back excited, that was lovely, but then it all seems to disappear.

The work experience activities that did seem to have some lasting effect were generally part of a broader work preparation program. The attempts of the 14 schools already mentioned above to prepare their students for the world they were about to enter (apart from the traditional tertiary-oriented curriculum) took the form of transition education programs or alternative courses, and courses in living skills. These courses have been grouped under this issue heading but have considerable relevance to other issues such as Special Social Competencies, Contemporary Society and Social Change, Alternative Organizational Arrangements, Education of Disadvantaged Students, Development of Personal Identity, and all the Skills issues.

In the pages that follow, summaries are given of Special Social Competencies courses, of alternative courses at Years 12, 11, and 10 and of an inter-school work and education program.

Special social competencies. Five of the schools visited (Schools 8, 10, 21, 26, and 27) offered courses that dealt with living skills which were time-tabled for all students in one or more year levels from Years 9 to 12, with a time allocation of between one and five periods a week. A wide range of topics was covered by these courses: for instance, the Life Studies course in School 26 comprised units for Year 9 on health recreation, food and health, decision making, keyboard skills, and legal studies; and units for Year 10 on health, finance, consumer education, focus on you, government, and basic economics. The curriculum for the Year 11 social awareness course in School 27 was developed from discussions among the staff and with students on the areas of awareness that students should be exposed to; areas that were incorporated into the course were the law and the community, sex education, comparative religion, comparative education, migration, death, employment, and trade unions. Films, speakers and excursions were used to introduce a topic, which was then explored further in personal research and group discussions.

Much thought and preparation had been put into the courses in the five schools by staff, often in consultation with students and community members. It was sometimes

difficult for teachers to find a balance between breadth and depth in the coverage of relevant areas, to avoid both superficiality and academic ponderousness. There seemed to be great potential in these courses, not always realized, to escape from the usual senior school 'study of texts' approach, to incorporate a variety of teaching methods and stimuli to learning and to 'relate knowledge to life' in the way envisaged in the Schools Commission (1980) report. All but one of the five schools providing courses in Special Social Competencies were government schools, a reflection of the higher degree of support given to this issue by government school principals in the survey.

Year 12 alternative course. The alternative course was first introduced in 1974 at School 19, a non-government Independent school, for those students whose interests, needs and abilities were not well suited to the academic matriculation course. When the course was being planned, advice was sought from parents and community members who were potential employers of young people; their advice was particularly valuable in the development of the curriculum in mathematics, natural resources management, and communication skills. The subject areas covered were Australian economic studies, communications, geographical studies, mathematical studies, natural resources management, physical education, social studies, and scripture. In the approach to learning in these subjects, there was a reliance on case studies, co-operative projects, group discussions, and self-directed work; emphasis was given to the use of community resources, to the acquisition of job-related skills, and to an understanding of the Australian environment and contemporary social issues. One student made the following comments on the course:

> The A12 course is not as hard as matric. but there's a lot of work to do. I'd rather do well in A12 than not so well in matric. It gives you time for other things at school - you can get involved and help out. It's good not to have exams. English is good; it's helped me so much, with things like how to apply for jobs and how to get along with people.

Year 11 alternative course. 1982 was the first year that an alternative course had been offered at School 12, a Catholic girls school. The course was planned to cover three of the four school terms in a year so that the students would enter a job market before the end of the normal school year; during the fourth term students without jobs were able to come back to the school one day a week to talk to teachers, review job applications, and practise job-related skills. It was obligatory for the girls undertaking the course to have a part-time job, and they were encouraged to do technical institute courses (like jazz ballet and pottery) in their own time. The core subjects were practical mathematics, basic English skills, civic studies, leisure skills and outdoor education, commercial studies, personal perspectives, and life skills. Elective studies were available at a technical institute, and there were regular time allocations to community service and work experience. The three blocks of work experience, each lasting one

week, followed a particular pattern. In first term staff tried to place students in their dream jobs, which were 'generally associated with animals, young children, or hair'; these experiences proved to be useful in bringing students to terms with their own realities (for instance one student abandoned her idea of being a veterinary assistant after being bitten by three cats in an animal surgery). In the second term staff placed students in jobs of the staff's choosing (which worked particularly well with one girl who, after a week's work in a police station, was motivated to return to the academic stream so that she could qualify to be a policewoman). In the third term staff offered a wide range of jobs to students and used interviews as a selection process. A major group project was undertaken in each of the three semesters: in the first term the students painted and decorated the room they were to use as a base; in the second term they operated a coffee shop for other students; and in third term they did bulk catering (for freezers or parties) on order from staff or students' families, which involved estimating quantities, buying ingredients, working to a time schedule, and trying to make a profit.

It was a hard year for the staff: 'There were times when we thought it wasn't worthwhile. The students were very difficult in third term, but that's when things started to come together for them'. All students were placed in jobs or further education by the end of the year.

Year 10 transition education course. The purpose of this course, in its second year of operation in School 6, a government girls high school, was outlined by the teacher in charge.

> The aim of the transition education course is to fill in the gaps for the student who has got to Year 10, can't go any further, is going to leave school and be a misfit in society - to provide an interesting curriculum alternative that will encourage them to be responsible citizens and will give them some positive experiences so that they don't see school as a horrible place they have failed in.

This teacher had undertaken a six-week training program for transition education co-ordinators and had developed considerable insight into the needs and problems of her students.

> I don't think when you have been academically successful (as most teachers have) you realize what an embarrassment it is and what a sense of failure it provokes when you have to hand in a piece of work that you know is full of spelling mistakes and no good - so rather than facing up to the fact they don't hand it in.

Parents had appreciated the school's efforts to provide an education for their daughters and the sorts of curriculum options that would enable them to develop as individuals and as job-seekers, and give them experience of success. Several parents told the co-ordinator that it was hard for them to come up and talk about their children's problems because they themselves had been failures at school.

The students had a reduced academic load in English, mathematics and science, and

an increased emphasis on communication skills in these subjects. If they wished, the students could sit for the School Certificate subject examinations. All students in Year 10 did a personal development course, with a particular focus for transition education students on self-awareness and self-esteem. In relation to work experience, the year started with basic work preparation (interview techniques, appearance, application forms), then progressed to employer awareness (looking at the job market and areas of growth) and finally to work experience, starting with one day a week for eight weeks (changing the jobs if they did not work out for the students in order to maintain their self-esteem) and ending with a week of continuous work experience. One day a week was devoted to excursions and community work; the co-ordinator felt that the community work was a morale-booster for the students: 'At school they're at the bottom of the hierarchy and it helps if they can see someone who's worse off than they are whom they can help'.

According to the co-ordinator, the students had started the year with strong feelings of hostility, to each other and to the school, that had built up over their three years of secondary schooling with constant experiences of failure. As the year progressed, the students began to develop some confidence in themselves and were more able then to work co-operatively with other students. The approach to assessment was co-operative rather than competitive - achievement was measured in terms of the student's own progress, not in relation to the achievement of other students. The students themselves were keen to talk about the advantages of the course for them.

> This has been better than ordinary Year 10. In English, instead of just doing nouns and verbs and all that, we do things that will help us when we leave school, like we fill out forms and learn how to do interviews. And you learn by having to work things out for yourself when you do new things or go out on work experience. If I hadn't had Trans. Ed. I would have been more confused than I was at the beginning of this year because now we know what to expect, and we've got more open minds, and we're not so frightened about going into the big world.

Years 10 and 12 alternative courses. One government high school (School 5) offered special courses for early school leavers and for Year 12 students not interested in matriculation.

A Student Centre had been established for prospective early school leavers where staff worked with individual students on English and mathematics to maintain the skills they possessed and develop the skills they lacked. Because the students tended to be personally and socially inept, considerable time was spent in helping students to acquire some sense of their own worth. They worked on practical projects - for example they erected a pergola in the school yard, which involved the development of problem-solving skills in working out how to do it, the development of social skills in going down to the shops for materials and advice, the development of practical skills in carrying out the job, and the development of self-confidence through its successful completion. One day

a week was spent in work experience and employers were asked to report on students. A member of staff commented on the value of these reports:

> Reports from work experience employers are valuable for future employment because the kids are not going to get glowing reports from school, but if employers say they're punctual or hard workers that will be a help when they're looking for a job.

Staff were hoping to revive a successful project that had previously been carried out over a five-year period with Year 11 students. During this time the students had planned and built and equipped a factory, with a turnover of $3000 a year, which manufactured products such as hanging baskets, kites and stickers for distribution in the local area.

The Year 12 transition course had been organized the previous year after a meeting with the parents of students who wanted a non-matriculation final year at school. The subjects offered (such as communication, basic mathematics, social education, technical studies, applied physical science) were all geared up to prepare students to enter the workforce as competent and confident individuals. The course was considered successful because, of the 20 students who started the year, only four were left at the end; the rest had all been placed in jobs.

Youth Education Advisory Committee. The Committee was initiated by a careers teacher in School 9, a government high school, and had met once a fortnight for the past two years. It was composed of local area representatives of employers, CES, CYSS, a tertiary institution, and career teachers from six secondary schools. The Committee saw its role as 'alleviating the problems of youth unemployment, developing careers education, and seeking to inform employers and the community in general about the problems faced by the area's youth'.

In 1981 the Committee sponsored a fourth-year social-work student to undertake a survey of local employers. The information gathered in the survey provided a basis for the Committee's activities in 1982: (1) three tertiary students interviewed 16 students from Years 7-12 (and some of their parents) at each of the six schools represented on the Committee, to investigate patterns of career and educational aspirations and choices; (2) a forum was held for 100 employers, teachers, parents and students with the purpose of generating a co-operative approach to the work experience program; (3) funding was obtained for 1983 to support two or three teachers on 0.5 time to report on structure, curriculum, career education, and work experience in the six schools and consequently to foster joint development of overlapping programs and co-ordination of a range of senior level options; (4) to counter a worsening local labour market, the Committee carried out an investigation into the feasibility of establishing a group apprenticeship scheme in the region to provide further opportunities for school leavers.

Comment

'Transition education' has succeeded 'careers education' and 'work experience' as the current educational answer to the question of what schools should do to prepare school leavers, particularly early school leavers, for the adult working world they are about to enter. Transition education programs and alternative courses for senior students have been introduced in all Australian States, and critical appraisals of the principles and practices of transition education have started to appear in the literature of education.

Cole (1982:2) stated his belief that advocacy of transition education should be synonymous with advocacy for curriculum review and reform; he found that too often transition education programs adopted a reactive approach to transition problems, an approach that focused on remedying the deficiences of a selected group of students, usually low-achievers.

> A precondition to developing educationally sound transition education programs is the recognition that new content, processes and structures will have to be adopted and that attempts to graft new programs onto traditionally oriented curricula are counter-productive. (Cole, 1982:9)

Reilly (1982) put forward the proposition that the 'add-on' transition education programs for low-status students would perpetuate the mental-manual dichotomy that is present in the work-place and reflected in the school:

> In school, success has been identified with performance in the academic curriculum and failure with relegation to craft and hands-on learning...The existence of a transition program with a focus on work preparation and 'low-achieving' populations may represent the mental/manual split in a new guise. (Reilly, 1982:6)

Reilly felt that the tendency for programs to become more vocational and more specified, as well as the absence of links to further education, worked against the aims of the Transition Education Advisory Committee (TEAC) in Victoria to equip students with transferable skills and to expand students' educational and vocational options.

What, then, would be the characteristics of a transition education program that did achieve the desired aims of TEAC? Cole (1982:9-10) listed a number of approved characteristics and drew on the Schools Commission's (1980) report on 15 and 16 year-olds for support. Some of the listed characteristics were: (1) close teacher-student and student-student interaction; (2) parental and community participation; (3) flexible time-tabling to allow changes in student/teacher ratio and group or individual activities; (4) mixed ability grouping; (5) curriculum negotiation between teachers and students and involvement of students in democratic decision making; (6) emphasis on enquiry and experiential learning processes; and (7) emphasis on co-operative rather than competitive endeavour.

The transition education programs and alternative courses described in the present study displayed some of these characteristics but not others. All the courses mentioned

were 'add-on' courses rather than part of a complete restructuring, but this is probably inevitable when a new idea is being tried out in schools. The more ambitious restructuring could take years to think through and develop, but there is no reason why a school could not be involved in this developmental process while operating an 'add-on' transition program.

The transition programs observed contained a limited amount of curriculum negotiation but little involvement of students in democratic decision making. There was some flexibility in time-tabling and some parent and community involvement. Closer teacher-student and student-student relationships were developed, and there was considerable emphasis on co-operation rather than competition and on enquiry and experiential learning processes. Some of the courses were offered only to low achievers, while others were open to all students but tended to attract the less academic, so that none of the groups was representative of a wide range of abilities. Nevertheless, these programs seemed to help students become more confident and competent young adults than they would have been if they had remained in the academic mainstream of education; certainly the Youth Education Advisory Committee in School 9 was working towards curriculum review and reform through co-operative school and community endeavour.

CHAPTER 7

SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE IN TWO SCHOOLS

The emphasis in the last two chapters was on particular school practices which exemplified certain issues, and many schools appeared under several different issue headings. The two schools discussed in the following pages have appeared in this way, but in this section they are presented as total units to show how, in each school, a number of different practices were drawn into a flexible but integrated school structure in order to achieve a common goal, a process that seemed to go a long way towards meeting the Schools Commission criteria for successful schooling in valuing the whole age group and relating knowledge to life.

Multiculturalism in a Government High School

School 17 was founded in the early 1970s and had an unsettled beginning with five principals in its first eight years. When the present principal arrived in 1979, it was a school lacking in direction and divided into factions, trying to cope with students from different socio-economic backgrounds (because of a middle-class influx in a working-class area) and different ethnic backgrounds (from 19 countries).

The first thing that the principal did to bind the school together was to introduce a new approach to language teaching. As it finally evolved, it became compulsory for students in Years 8, 9, and 10 to do two languages, and the seven languages offered represented the most populous ethnic groups in the school (Italian, Greek, Russian, German, Serbo-Croat, Polish and Vietnamese). To quote the principal:

> What that did immediately was give credibility to those kids who spoke those languages, so that the languages changed from something funny in the schoolyard that was used to swear at people to a subject that could be followed through to matric.

The factions gradually disappeared both from the staffroom and from the schoolyard. The staffing composition changed from 12 per cent from non-English-speaking backgrounds to 49 per cent, reflecting the composition of the student population. After school language classes were introduced for staff - over the past three years Greek, Serbo-Croatian and Italian had been offered. (The 1982 Italian class was attended by fourteen staff, four parents, two teacher aides, and two primary school teachers). It became a conscious policy to encourage the speaking of different languages in the staffroom, the corridors and the library, and signs around the school were printed in five languages. The language room was restructured; walls were knocked down so that four or five different language activities could be going on at the one time, reflecting the 'unity in diversity' philosophy that governed the multicultural development of the school.

The other major unifying curricular thrust was in sport. All students did three to four hours of physical education a week, based on core and options, with students making an input into the syllabus structure. The range of activities offered included aquatic sports, outdoor adventure activities, fitness, judo, dance, ice skating, squash, archery, as well as a variety of team sports. Through the wide range of offerings in physical education, all students were able to achieve some measure of mastery in an area of interest to them, and were equipped with a variety of leisure skills.

The past two years had been spent by staff committees devising the school's philosophical statement on multiculturalism. During that time the school had been awarded a grant for multicultural education from the Commonwealth Government. The principal commented, 'What we are trying to do doesn't need money, but money makes it happen faster'. Half of the grant was spent on developing a multicultural component of the library and employing a Greek-speaking library assistant, on the language classes for teachers, and on physical education equipment; the other half was allocated to teacher release days for curriculum development because this was considered to be the main focus of the multicultural education program in the school. Home economics was the subject in which most progress had been made, and developments had begun in science, art and Australian history. The home economics teachers, with some help from outside consultants, evolved a statement of philosophy in relation to the subject, the school, and multiculturalism, then a statement of aims (under the headings of tolerance, communication, and co-operation); currently they were using the newly developed state home economics curriculum framework as a basis and, for each year level, worked out aims, rationales, key concepts, and areas of application in the content of multiculturalism. They were using staff, parents and students from different ethnic backgrounds as resource people for the course.

Money had also been provided to finance four multicultural education teachers: a Vietnamese teacher provided subject help in the home language for Vietnamese students; a mathematics/science teacher helped other teachers in the classroom, looking at scientific language and working individually with students; a specialist teacher of English as a second language worked with students in a withdrawal situation in the first phase of language learning; the fourth teacher was responsible for community relations, staff development, and curriculum infusion. The latter teacher also had a history class in which he sought to demonstrate how multiculturalism could be incorporated into the curriculum. At the time of the school visit, students were out interviewing community members from various ethnic backgrounds on what it meant to be an Australian, and one of the Russian parents was coming to the school to talk about her parents' recollections of the Russian revolution, which the students were studying. The same teacher had organized a multicultural festival at the school in conjunction with the Adelaide Festival, with food and craft stalls and folk dancing, and the South Australian ethnic

radio station operated from the school for that day. The multicultural education teachers provided support for students out of school hours as well as during school time:

> I help kids with extra-curricular things like bus passes, doctors' appointments, easing them into our way of life. In the holidays we all met and had lunch and went downtown (most parents won't let the kids out by themselves). It's very slow working in the classroom, not like the withdrawal situation where you can see tangible results - but the integration of kids is part of the success, seeing kids mixing with others and feeling confident enough to talk with them, rather than learning to write a perfect English sentence. If you get them talking to other kids, their English will gradually improve.

The fostering of multiculturalism was the central focus of the school's philosophy, but there were other aspects of the school operation which worked towards similar ends: (1) pastoral care sessions were time-tabled daily for small groups of students from the same year level (see Chapter 5 for a more detailed description); (2) a support group was formed - comprising the counsellor, English teachers, language teachers, English as a second language teachers - to provide help to slow learners and students with language problems; (3) the school had an annexe where non-academic senior students could acquire practical skills and knowledge, undertaking restoration projects in the annexe; (4) students and staff built and maintained an animal sanctuary specializing in the care of native Australian animals and birds; (5) the rate of staff participation in the decision-making processes of the school was very high, reflected in the good attendance at after-school committee meetings which were held on every day of the week; (6) staff development days, sometimes including intensive training sessions, were held every few months on themes that were central to the school's operation, such as pastoral care and multicultural education; (7) attending the school were five physically handicapped students who had been unable to gain admittance to any other high school. One of these students wrote, 'I would say that this is one of the most accessible schools around and their attitude towards disabled students is to give us a go, and be helpful, but still let us be like everyone else'; (8) the deputy principal was involved in a program designed to educate girls to meet the changing needs of women in society, to encourage them to look in new career directions; and (9) the school had a retention rate to Year 12 of 66 per cent compared with a state average of 33 per cent, partly achieved through the range of offerings available to senior students, with Year 11 operating on a 10-week module system, and with four different kinds of course structure available to Year 12 students.

The following comments were made by teachers and students at the school:

Teacher: This school is as democratic and broad-based as any school I know.

Teacher: The key things at this school are care, concern, and communication.

Student: The principal's strategy seems to be let the kids have a lot of say in the school.

Student: The whole school is a big pastoral care group.

School-centred Community Development Program

The school around which this program centred, School 7, was a Catholic boys secondary school for Years 7-10; on the same campus was a co-educational primary school and a girls secondary school. The two secondary schools were classified as disadvantaged schools in 1976; a government survey of municipalities carried out at the same time categorized the region in which the schools were placed as 'severely disadvantaged'. The region had a high non-English-speaking population and although there were many community resources available to these people, they did not know how to use them. A regionally funded research program was undertaken, to alleviate the disadvantage in the area, by a social work/teaching team of sisters from a local order of nuns and lay social workers. Rather than provide 'band-aid' support through existing services, the team decided that system change could be best achieved by gaining access to the disadvantaged members of the community through a 'normal' population such as a school. All three schools on the campus had contact with the program over the ensuing years, but it was the boys school and its principal that were most closely involved.

The mission of the program was stated as being 'to enhance social justice and total well-being for teachers, children and their families by bringing about social institutional change through the development of school-centred communities'. The program had four components - pastoral care, professional support, school-family liaison, and model evaluation, and the general objectives of these components were as follows:

> Pastoral care:
>
> To develop an integrated pastoral care structure and program which facilitates positive student-teacher-family interaction and development in order to create a climate of mutual care and respect within the school community.
>
> Professional support:
>
> To provide professional support for members of the school community in order to develop social and interactional skills, facilitate positive family functioning and ensure that vulnerable situations are recognized and appropriate action taken to prevent break-down.
>
> School-family liaison:
>
> To develop parent involvement in the school in order to ensure parent participation in specific programs and in the decision-making process of the school.
>
> Model evaluation:
>
> To develop and evaluate the school-centred community model with reference to movement in the social indicators of the school community and the municipality.

The first action undertaken by the program team was the organization of a holiday program in 1977 for the students of the secondary schools, designed to begin the involvement of teachers and parents, to develop a range of skills in the students, and to get the boys and girls used to working together (as one of the aims of the program was to introduce co-education at the secondary level).

During 1977 and 1978 the teachers at the two schools had to learn new skills - writing submissions for grants from the Disadvantaged Schools Program, learning to analyse their approaches to teaching and the process of negotiation with students, and participating in the planning of the school-centred community program. Starting in 1979, the social workers began to do counselling and problem-solving work with the teachers, students, and parents from the school community and supported the work of the principal of the boys school in encouraging more student and parent involvement in the decision-making processes of the school. Over the next few years a number of developmental projects were carried out with the school community, some of which have been described in previous sections, and all of which contributed to the achievement of the four program aims.

1 The parent involvement program in the boys school resulted in about 50 parents, mostly migrant women, participating regularly in various aspects of school operation. This created an unexpected problem - 'Some of the women who have become involved in the various programs have developed a lot, and this creates its own problems because husbands haven't moved with them and don't like it.

2 A series of family consultation meetings were held, involving parents and students together with teachers, to discuss the development of the school campus, and to submit a report to the Catholic Education Office.

3 As part of the family support service, a Crisis Care Centre was established where any person from the schools' families could stay in care (or take 'time out') for up to a month, with follow-up support from social workers or teachers when back in the community.

4 Both the parent involvement program and the pastoral care program started with Year 7 boys and their families with planned future expansion to other year levels. Social workers and teachers worked together on the pastoral care program, broadening its scope to include a merit and discipline system.

5 Year 9 students and parents from the two schools joined the social workers in a study for the National Association of Catholic Parents on sex-role stereotyping. Students and teachers devised a questionnaire which students administered to a sample of parents. Students devised and acted out examples of stereotyped sex roles and videotaped their performance.

6 A whole-year program for Year 8 students was planned at a separate location; the initiators envisaged a co-educational program but the girls school withdrew. The project had been on the drawing board for several years and, when funding was received, it took a year's intensive planning by teachers and social workers before implementation in 1981. The program was aimed to develop living skills, literacy, and leisure education. One of the teachers commented on the need for such a program:

> The kids of this age at school are cooped up with energy to expend; they're often overweight, poor at reading, and they need to extend their thinking and experience of leisure as a concomitant of potential unemployment.

Two of the previous year's student participants in the program had the following comments to make:

> Students get to know each other, learn more things about life, understand themselves better. If you go straight through from Year 7 to 10, school is boring and dull, but if you have a break like the Leisure Project things become different for you and your future.
>
> Going straight through, studies pile up and the pressure increases, so you have a nervous breakdown or quit school; but with the Leisure Project you spread out your study time and plan your program, you balance yourself and your health also.

Comment

The two schools described in this chapter were based in different educational systems, but both had faced difficulty and disadvantage and both had worked through to achieve a considerable measure of success. The schools had in common several operational features or characteristics that contributed to their success: strong leadership from the principal; extended commitment from the teachers; an acute consciousness of the nature of the local population served by the school which resulted in a school program adapted to the needs of that population; the provision of a range of teaching methods, curriculum offerings, and school structures, so that all students could be accommodated; and a readiness to use outside expertise and community resources to enhance and strengthen the school program.

CHAPTER 8

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

One of the intentions of the study of school practice was to verify the claims of principals about the importance of certain issues in their schools. In general the observations of school practice and the discussions with other members of staff in each of the 17 schools visited provided confirmation of the educational priorities indicated by their principals in the questionnaire.

In all the schools the principal was a key factor in the successful implementation of school practice, either as a prime mover or as a source of support (sometimes tacit, sometimes tangible) for the initiators.

The school practices selected for observation were chosen from the questionnaire descriptions more as possible examples of successful practice, interesting in their own right, than as specific examples of the most important issues identified in the survey, although most of these issues were covered in the programs of the 27 schools contacted. The following pages contain a brief review of issues and practices.

The insights into the issues that emerged from the descriptions of organizational and curricular school practice have been drawn together in another section of this chapter, concerned with common elements in successful practice. The chapter concludes with a final comment on schooling and the future.

Review of Issues

Pastoral Care, Moral Education, and Development of Personal Identity were the three issues that drew a significantly different response from secondary school principals in the Issues survey, with much stronger support coming from the non-government sector than from the government sector. In practice, the Development of Personal Identity was an important component of programs in both government and non-government schools, such as remedial programs, alternative courses, and pastoral care programs. Moral Education, identified by 82 per cent of non-government principals in the survey as an important issue, was defined in the questionnaire as 'A study of the moral aspects of social issues, which may be taught in the context of several disciplines or as a separate subject, or it may be interpreted as the teaching of particular religious beliefs'. From discussions held with teachers in the school visits, it was apparent that 'religious beliefs' was the key phrase, which attracted non-government principals and deterred government principals. One of the non-government principals (from School 15) pointed out the dangers of this sort of ready acceptance.

> In Catholic schools moral education has always been associated with religion - people say 'Yes, that's religion, put it over there; thank goodness it's out of the way, we don't have to worry about it'. But Skilbeck's moral reasoning and values was supposed to 'permeate every aspect of the school's curriculum, which is easy to say and give assent to, but more difficult to put into practice.

In this school, and in some of the other non-government schools visited, a study of the moral aspects of social issues' had been incorporated into the curriculum, in social studies and pastoral care sessions and in scripture lessons. One principal commented, 'It's a difficult area because you can't impose moral values - the only thing you can question is their reasoning and suggest other ways of arriving at a decision. One can only begin to get the student thinking'. This approach to moral education, though not always thought of as such, was also found in some government schools in courses dealing with Special Social Competencies and Transition Education.

In the schools visited, pastoral care programs appeared more often in non-government than government schools, a reflection of the survey findings. It almost seems a contradiction in terms to allot 'pastoral care' a slot in the time-table, but that is what happened in the schools visited that were concerned with pastoral care in practice. In the schools where the programs were operating successfully, there did seem to be a spill-over effect on other areas, and the pastoral care role meant more than a guardianship of emotional development - it involved an active concern with the academic and social development of the students and with the establishment of school-community contacts.

In the discussion of the questionnaire results (see Chapter 3) it was postulated that pastoral care might appear in other guises in government schools, and this did happen in the schools visited, for instance in the transition education programs, where teachers gave a great deal of attention to the nurture of students' self-esteem and confidence. Pastoral care was a strong element in the remedial education programs discussed under Basic Skills, and it was an underlying concern in the three schools which had developed detailed discipline policies aimed at improving teacher-student relationships.

Looking at the last-mentioned issues in their own right, there are several observations to be made on their translations into practice in the schools visited. The issue of Discipline often has a punitive connotation when discussed in schools and the focus is on the student, but the discipline policies described in Chapter 5 were concerned as much with the behaviour of the teacher as with the behaviour of the student and, as well as rules and control, they explored expectations, understanding and responsiblity.

The practices that involved Basic Skills were mainly learning assistance schemes for low achievers. The assistance seemed to be most effective where there was a range of approaches from which the student could choose. There was an outstanding example of a reading program for all students (in School 16) which highlighted the importance of this skill for every child in every subject of the curriculum.

The investigation of school practices produced an unexpected outcome in the issue of Assessment. The trend among some secondary educators has been to regard an emphasis on marks as 'bad' and descriptive assessment as 'good'. But the descriptions of school practices showed there were many instances where marks and awards and records of achievement were an integral part of a program and were valued by students and teachers not as evidence of a competitive victory but as evidence of individual worth. This kind of assessment was found in the Reading Program in School 16, the Multi-Arts core curriculum in School 1, and in many of the Transition Education and Alternative courses. Often these marks or awards were accompanied by equally valuable descriptive assessments.

School Autonomy was defined in the Classification of Issues as 'the acceptances of responsibility for policy formulation and/or curriculum development', but in practice it was rare to see all elements of the school community working together in this way, although there were many examples of one or other group taking this sort of responsibility. Staff involvement in decision-making was evident in several schools, and the process seemed generalizable to other school situations, given the right principal. Parent and student involvement was a more complex process. It needed a lot of time and effort (always in short supply in active school environments) to work out the best means of bringing about any real involvement. Students at School 23, where there was full student participation in the decision-making process, said that incoming students initially had difficulty in accepting such responsibility:

> The main trouble is energy - teachers and students not only have to be involved in and committed to class work but also to keeping the school alive.

With parents it was important to work out the ways in which parents themselves wanted to be involved. It is too easy to say that migrant parents do not want to be involved - the Catholic school described in the last section of Chapter 5 (School 7) showed that they could and did, provided they were offered a range of alternatives and could choose one in which they felt comfortable.

The issue of School Aims and their Achievement was very general and all-encompassing. For school principals it seems that it was a little like the Moral Education issue in the non-government sector - the response tended to be 'Of course we're doing that and of course it's important', but the evidence was on paper not in practice. Both Aims and Professional Development were important in schools, not as global principles but as facilitating tools in the implementation of particular practices.

Preparation for the World of Work was of vital importance as an issue to the secondary principals in the survey, and this concern was born out in practice. Much teaching effort had been devoted to making this issue a reality for all students, but particularly for non-academic students. A number of the schools visited showed that they were becoming more conscious of the social context in which they operated and

were seeking to adapt the curriculum accordingly and to establish permanent and interactive contacts with the world outside the school walls; at the same time most of these schools managed to maintain a stringent academic program for students who desired it and would benefit from it.

For a number of the schools visited, interactive contact with the outside world meant contact with other educational institutions as well as contact with the community. These links were established in the early and later stages of secondary schooling, with primary schools and tertiary institutions respectively, thus preserving a sense of continuity in the educational process.

Review of Successful Practice

The principles adopted by the Schools Commission (1980), as criteria for successful practice, were that schools should cater for the personal and social needs of students by (1) valuing the whole age group, thus increasing the confidence and competence of all students, and (2) relating knowledge to life, so that students will leave school with knowledge and skills that apply to a wide range of settings in the world.

Some of the practices described in Chapters 5 and 6 exemplified the first principle, some the second, and other practices contained elements of both principles.

The pastoral care programs introduced in a number of schools gave particular emphasis to the social and personal development of students by building their confidence and fostering a caring attitude between teacher and student, and between student and student. The reading programs found in many schools were designed to increase both the confidence and competence of students, particularly when students were given sustained individual attention either within the classroom or outside it with a sympathetic and supportive helper.

The school which introduced a core curriculum for Years 7-10 in close consultation with parents, ex-students and current students was making a deliberate effort to equip its students during the years of compulsory schooling with knowledge and skills that they could apply when they left school in a wide range of settings. Any practice that actively sought to establish closer links with the community in which the school was based was endorsing the second Schools Commission principle, relating knowledge to life for the students concerned. One example of such a practice was the development of a major community resource in School 24 on a reclaimed portion of school land, which involved students, parents, teachers, and community members in a joint effort spread over several years; another example was the Youth Education Advisory Committee, a co-operative venture between careers teachers in six schools working in conjunction with employers and other representatives from the local community.

The transition education and alternative courses offered at Years 10, 11 and 12

were based on both principles. By providing alternatives to students not attracted by or likely to benefit from the traditional academic curriculum in their senior years, they were equipping the students with usable skills for the worlds of work and adult life and, by giving them experiences of success in areas that were important to them, they increased their confidence and strengthened their self-image.

The two schools that were described in Chapter 7 incorporated both principles in a range of practices designed round a common goal; in one case this was multiculturalism, and in the other it was school-centred community development. In School 17, the principal and teachers strongly espoused a belief in the principle of valuing each child, as evidenced by the language and physical education programs and the pastoral care and learning support programs. The implementation of a multicultural philosophy through curriculum change exemplified the second as well as the first principle, in that it aimed to pass on the cultural traditions represented in society and to link these traditions with the students' own experiences.

In School 7 the team of teachers and social workers showed that they valued not only the students but also the students' families, building confidence through structures such as the parent involvement program and the pastoral care program. The Year 8 program - focusing on living skills, literacy and leisure education - was specifically designed to relate areas of knowledge to the present and future lives of the students.

Common Elements in Successful Practice

From the descriptions of school practice in Chapters 5 and 6, it was possible to identify a number of factors, recurring in a variety of educational situations, that were associated with successful practice. These common factors or elements were related to program (what happened), process (how it happened), and personnel (who was involved). The discussion which follows gives most attention to the last two types of factors; the content of particular programs in relation to successful practice has been discussed in earlier sections of this chapter.

The process and personnel factors emerged from organizational as well as curricular contexts, which relates back to the decision made at the beginning of the study to divide the Classification of Issues into two sections, Organization and Curriculum, rather than concentrate only on curriculum as most other opinion surveys had done. The follow-up of the two types of issues in practice made it possible to look at secondary schooling from a wider perspective.

The following list is not exhaustive, nor is it definitive, but it contains some basic components of successful practice (derived from investigation of practices in 27 schools) that may be important for schools to consider if they are to undertake the 'fundamental reappraisal' of secondary education suggested by the Schools Commission.

Program

1 Continuity. An emphasis on continuity in learning helps ensure that students leave schools with a cohesive and comprehensive body of knowledge and skills. The developers of the core curriculum programs found that it was important to inspect closely the curriculum across subjects and across year levels within subjects (not just 'They did Julius Caesar last year so let's make it Romeo and Juliet this year') to avoid repetition and to close knowledge gaps. The concept of continuity in education is further fostered by maintaining contacts with primary schools and tertiary institutions.

2 Program to match needs. As the Transition Education and Alternative courses made apparent, students become involved and experience success in programs that have been tailored to their needs whereas the traditional academic alternatives may have produced alienation and failure. The needs may be expressed by students (as was seen in the development of discipline policies, core curriculum, and Youth Education Advisory Committee surveys) or observed by teachers (as was seen in the reading programs and in the planning of the Year 8 Living, Literacy and Leisure program at School 7).

3 Provision of alternatives. Following on from the previous factor, students are more likely to succeed when a range of curriculum options is available to them, such as the Physical Education activities at the multicultural school, and the four Year 12 course options at the same school. The same principle applies to learning assistance - students seemed more likely to make progress at schools where several different sorts of assistance were available to them. Parent involvement can operate in the same way - in the School-Centred Community Development Program at School 7, 50 parents became actively involved in the school in eight different types of activities where previously there had been no involvement.

Process

4 Detailed planning. Some educators work on the principle: 'Don't waste words, you know what you want to do, so just get on with it'. For some activities this is entirely appropriate, but the planners of many of the effective programs observed in the schools felt that the eventual success of the program depended on a clear appraisal of aims and the means of achievement, set down in a formally structured and often lengthy document, which then served as a reference point for future evaluation. This approach was taken by the planners of the multicultural Home Economics program at School 17, the Year 7 Pastoral Care program at School 7, the core curricula, and the discipline policies.

5 Need for time. A concomitant to the need for detailed planning is the need for time in which to do the planning: the Year 8 Living, Literacy and Leisure program was planned over a period of several years; and half of School 17's multicultural education grant was allocated to teacher release days to allow teachers time in which to plan curriculum changes.

6 Regular meetings. Structure is necessary in implementation as well as planning. It is tempting to think that spontaneity is liberating and routine stultifying, but the personnel involved in all the programs mentioned in Point 4 found it necessary to hold regular meetings to monitor the program, resolve problems, and provide peer reinforcement. The 50 parents in the eight parental involvement activities at School 7 met together regularly for the same sorts of reasons.

7 Follow through. In the context of the practices observed, 'follow through' means several things: it means examining the link between saying and doing (such as non-government schools equating moral education with religious instruction and failing to examine it in relation to the whole curriculum); it means not stopping short after one stage of an activity (such as failing to integrate work experience outcomes into subject syllabuses, or senior administrators constructing a detailed school aims document and failing to follow it through with subject faculties); and it means making both formative and summative evaluations of programs to ensure that aims are achieved and to provide a basis for future planning.

8 Flexibility of operation. Operators of successful programs took advantage of opportunities presented to promote their causes: for example, using parents to conduct personal interviews in a parent survey and to explain to other parents how the school operated and how they could participate; using the occasion of a school Multicultural Festival as a reason for inviting an ethnic radio station to use the school as a broadcasting venue; and using a mapping exercise in Geography as a stepping-off point for a school and community development project.

9 Unexpected outcomes. It is important for staff to be sensitive to unexpected outcomes of programs, such as the involvement of migrant women in school activities often leading to conflict in the home, and in the course of developing a discipline policy finding out that staff displayed as many behavioural inconsistencies as the students. If staff are aware of such (sometimes potentially upsetting) factors, they can accommodate to them in the operation of the program.

10 Recognition of achievement. Marks need not be a bogey as long as the ways in which they are used are tailored to the needs of the students. A variety of rewards and awards can be used to stimulate learning and recognize achievement, as

teachers found in Transition Education programs, Work Experience programs, and the Year 7 Reading Program at School 16.

Personnel

11 Staff cohesiveness. Probably the most important factor in determining the success of a practice as far as personnel are concerned is cohesiveness, the degree to which teachers co-operate and communicate with each other. In the schools that successfully operated democratic decision-making procedures, structures were set up to facilitate communication at all levels. The same principle operated in the family support and parent involvement components of the School-Centred Community Development Project in School 7. Often the principal plays a leading role in the development of staff cohesiveness. Sometimes cohesiveness is an outcome of a program, such as the increased understanding and support of the teachers that resulted from the development of discipline policies in two of the schools.

12 Identification with programs. Staff must identify with or 'own' a program, not just approve of it, for it to be carried through successfully, as happened with the core curricula, the discipline policies, and the three-stage Catholic evaluation program in School 3. Students in the equal participation school learnt to 'own' their programs as did students in some of the transition education practical activities.

13 Involvement in the decision-making process. The type of involvement has to be appropriate for the members concerned; democratic decision-making does not mean equal involvement of all school community members in all decisions. Staff necessarily carry the greater part of the burden of decision-making, and there were several examples of democracy in action in school staffrooms. Student and parent involvement in decision-making seems to be more difficult to achieve, but there are precedents - several school principals said that parents from non-English-speaking backgrounds could not be involved in school decision making, but two Catholic schools managed to do it. Several schools tried student involvement and succeeded only on a superficial level; equal representation with staff on a policy-making committee and equal rights in determining curriculum were the only two examples of a more significant student involvement in decision making.

14 Personnel from allied fields. The regular and long-term involvement in schools of trained and trainee personnel from areas of expertise allied to education (such as social work) provides fresh input and new perspectives to thinking and achievement in a school, as was found in the Youth Education Advisory Committee activities, and in the School-Centred Community Development Project.

15 Whole school community co-operation. In most of the day-to-day work of a school, it is not appropriate or necessary to have active participation of all members of the school community (administrators, teachers, parents, students, people from tertiary institutions and the local community) but, where it is appropriate and it does happen, outcomes are achieved that would not have been possible with a narrower personnel commitment, as in the School and Community Resource Project at School 24, the Youth Education Advisory Committee work, and the School-Centred Community Development program.

Final Comment: A Reappraisal of Schools

The present study of issues and practices in Australian schools has produced some insights into principals' views of the important educational issues of the 1980s and the school practices which exemplify these priorities. Two frameworks were developed in the course of the study which may be of use to those administrators and practitioners in education who are looking to a reappraisal of secondary schooling as recommended by the Schools Commission. The two frameworks are: the classification of educational issues, which involves an organizational component as well as the more commonly found curricular component; and the three-part categorization of the common elements of successful practice, listed under the headings of program, process, and personnel.

Relevant to a discussion of school reappraisal are the philosophy, methodology, and outcomes of a major study of schooling undertaken in the United States by Goodlad and his associates in the latter half of the 1970s. Goodlad rejected the production function tradition of educational research with its reliance on measuring the input of resources to schools against the output of student performance on standardized achievement tests. In such a model, he claims:

> Efficiency (determined by a high output in relation to input) is important and becomes an index of educational quality not just fiscal attributes. The model tends not to focus on the environment, how it functions, and how it responds to interventions. (Goodlad et al., 1979:175)

The researchers involved in A Study of Schooling were committed to the basic assumption that improving schools required knowing what was going on in and around them, so the study focused on a large number of variables existing and interacting within the context of a small number of schools (12 senior high schools, 12 junior high schools, and 13 elementary schools).

> We have not been led to the study of achievement outcomes...For us, studying what goes on in schools holds more promise for understanding schools (and, therefore, for being in a position to improve them) than studying what comes out of schools. (Goodlad et al., 1979:174)

Sirotnik and Oakes (1981), members of the research team, have adapted the

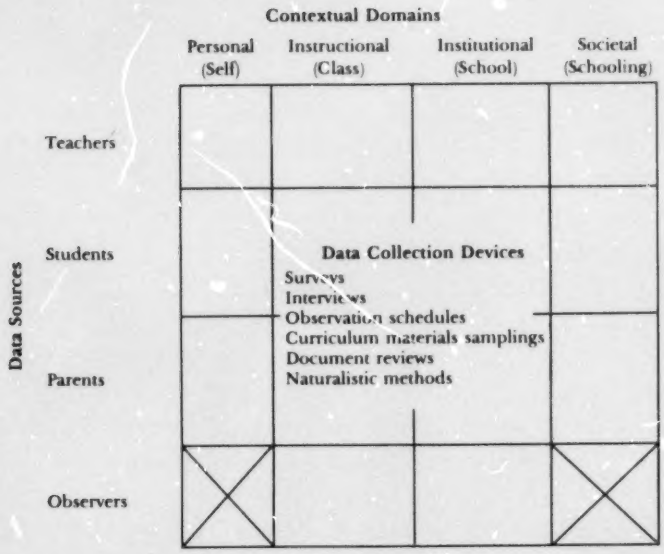

Figure 8.1 A Framework for Identifying and Organizing Contextual Variables

data-collection framework used in A Study of Schooling and put it forward as a contextual appraisal system that would enable schools to collect information about 'relevant areas of the educational process that are anticipated to have important consequences for learning and instruction' (Sirotnik and Oakes, 1981:166). The framework contains four contextual domains and four levels at which data can be gathered in each domain (see Figure 8.1).

This framework could be a useful tool in the reappraisal not only of American schools but also of Australian schools. The components of the framework ensure that a broad base is established for the consideration of educational issues and practices, which is in accord with the principles enumerated in the present study and in other sources quoted in this report, principles such as the involvement of all sectors of the school community in decision making and school operations, and the relevance of a societal as well as a personal context in a consideration of the learning process and in the development of a curriculum.

It might be useful, in view of the common elements of successful practice outlined earlier in this chapter, to refine further the data source categories of the framework in order to enable the collection of more precise information: for example, the Teachers category could be divided into principals, co-ordinators, and classroom teachers; the Parents category could distinguish between English-speaking and non-English speaking parents; and the Students category could include students from feeder primary schools and from local tertiary institutions.

The distinction that the framework makes between instructional, institutional, and societal contexts might encourage personnel to look beyond change to the individual or to the curriculum and to consider changes to school organization. As another American researcher, Apple (1976:180) said, when discussing current attitudes to school change, 'Almost all action is focused on changing the individual rather than the defining agent, the larger institutional context'. Certainly, in the present study of school practice in 27 schools, more curricular than organizational change seemed to be occurring; the focus tended to be on helping the individual to overcome difficulties or improve performance within the present school structure rather than considering change to the structure itself.

One of Goodlad's recommendations from A Study of Schooling concerned organizational innovation: he proposed a vertical unit structure in which secondary schools would be organized into four-year units of 160 students with teams of teachers allocated to each unit and responsible for the learning of this group over the four-year period; use would also be made of peer teaching 'to reduce the passivity and lone learning of the present classroom situation' (Goodlad, 1983:557). A vertical unit structure has been introduced into a small number of schools in Australia, as reported, for instance, in Sturman's (1982) account of patterns of school organization in 16 schools. The underlying philosophy of such models of schooling is closely allied to the philosophy of the vertically structured pastoral care programs discussed in detail in this report - a philosophy that encompasses a concern for the care of the individual student and a desire to encourage social cohesion and co-operative learning. School communities that were considering the introduction of a vertically structured whole school program, which would be a major undertaking, might find it useful to introduce a vertically structured pastoral care program as a preparatory step. To repeat the quotation from Marland (1974:204): 'Pastoral care is the essence of a school and ... the structuring of the school is the key to its success'.

Directing school reappraisal specifically towards organizational restructuring, such as the vertical unit structure, may solve the problem of the neglected middle school. The focus of change in the school practices observed in the present study tended to be at the top or the bottom of the secondary school structure, not at the middel level, although it is at this level, as research has shown (see Connell et al., 1975; Wright and Headlam, 1978; and Batten and Girling-Butcher, 1981), that students tend to feel most dissatisfied with school. There may be a case for bringing into the middle school some of the organizational flexibility seen in the senior level transition education and alternative programs observed in this study: in those programs students were beginning to go in and out of the work place, in and out of the community, and in and out of technical and further education institutions. Similar ventures could be incorporated into a more flexible middle school organization and curriculum structure.

A reappraisal of schools in terms of their organizational structure might also include the consideration and expansion of other practices that have been highlighted in this report, such as co-operative school and community endeavour, peer tutoring, corporate and collegiate decision-making processes, and inter-institutional interaction.

Although, from the evidence of the present study, it is organizational issues which need particular investigation and action in the secondary school, attention to curriculum change must be maintained. The major area of curriculum change observed in this study occurred in the upper seconday school in the years of post-compulsory schooling. The focus of observed change was contained in the alternative and transition education programs that were offered to students in Years 10, 11, and 12. These programs addressed the problem of preparing students for the adult world they were about to enter and, in so doing, tackled other organizational and curricular issues such as assessment, basic skills, and pastoral care. In recent years educationists have urged a reconsideration of the education offered to students in the senior secondary years:

> The two post-compulsory years are now the most crucial in the whole education system. Unless they can be broadened in emphasis and can lead out into a wider range of subsequent possibilities, there is little point in encouraging school retention. (Blackburn, 1981:94)

It is important that none of the three secondary areas (covering the junior, middle, and senior years) are neglected by school communities seeking to improve their schools, and that a sense of continuity is maintained through the three levels. Continuity becomes a concept of particular importance if the upper secondary school is seen as a separate entity, as in the presently operating senior colleges, or the proposed youth complexes (Shears, 1983) or community colleges (Beswick et al., 1983).

The two frameworks that were developed in this study - the classification of issues, and the common elements of successful practice - and the contextual appraisal framework discussed in this chapter provide a comprehensive basis and framework for the collection of relevant information to service school community discussions of both organizational and curricular change. That such discussions are essential, Goodlad, at the end of his exhaustive six-year study of schooling, is in no doubt:

> Recent analyses of contemporary society reveal a relentless restructuring taking place that is changing our lives and what demands a fundamental restructuring of schools. (Goodlad, 1983:553-4)

APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE TO PRINCIPALS

ISSUES AND PRACTICES IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

The Development of a Classification of Educational Issues

In order to determine what the community thought about our primary and secondary schools and where they should be heading in the eighties, a search was made of the relevant literature that had appeared over the past few years. The information was gathered from sources such as books, articles, surveys, committee reports, policy documents, research findings, and conference addresses; opinions were expressed by members of the school community (principals, teachers, parents, students), staff in tertiary institutions, government bodies and their representatives (such as the Schools Commission), committees of enquiry, educational associations, media commentators, and the general public.

The issues thus identified by the school community and the wider community formed the basis of a classification of educational issues. The classification was sent to representatives of community groups with an interest in education for ratification and comment. The groups included education centres, state and regional education offices, research institutes, and associations of employers, teachers, students and parents.

Details of the Classification

On the basis of the group representatives' comments the classification of educational issues was revised and a final form produced, which is the substance of this document. The issues fall into two broad categories, and each category contains two sub-categories.

Organization: (1) general issues of school management;
(2) issues that concern the teaching component of school organization.

Curriculum: (1) issues relevant to the personal development of students, the acquisition of intellectual and physical skills;
(2) issues relevant to the social development of students, learning about self in relation to society.

According to the Oxford dictionary an 'issue' can be a 'point in question' or an 'outcome', so that in the context of the school an issue may be important either as a subject for debate ('something we are thinking about') or as the realization of a policy decision ('something we are doing'). For the purposes of this Classification the focus is on the second of the two definitions, the things you are doing in the school as a result of policy decisions.

The Classification contains 28 issues that have been identified, by the methods outlined previously, as issues of importance to schools in these early years of the 1980s. Some of the issues are acknowledged to have been of long-standing but continuing importance, while others have assumed importance only recently. Each of the issues in the Classification has been defined in a way that is not too prescriptive, to allow for different interpretations of the concept in individual school practice. There is an inevitable overlap between certain issues but the major focus in each is different.

The Task required of School Principals

When you have read through the Classification, please give consideration to the issues in the following way.

1 Which of the issues listed in the classification do you consider to be of major current importance in your school?

Choose up to four issues in the Organization section and up to six issues in the Curriculum section (disregarding, for this purpose, the four sub-category headings).

Indicate your priority issues with a tick in the column on the far right of the page.

2 There is a space at the end of each category where amendments to listed issues can be made and details of any additional issues of importance to your school can be given.

3 The last page contains two sections. The first section allows space for brief descriptions of one or two current practices in your school that exemplify some of the priority issues you have identified as the most important issues of the eighties for your school.

The second section allows you to identify any issues that are still 'points in question' rather than 'outcomes' at your school, but that you consider to be of importance. You may also wish to identify any constraints that might be operating to prevent the translation of these issues into practice.

CLASSIFICATION OF ISSUES: ORGANIZATION

Importance

Management

1 School Aims and Their Achievement. General and specific goals for the school, the department, and the individual class; and the means for determining the extent to which these goals are being achieved. This may include a concern with the process for establishing aims, regular revision of statements of aims, and different kinds of evaluation of goal achievement.

2 School Autonomy. The acceptance of responsibility for policy formulation and/or curriculum development by the school community. This may entail varied degrees of involvement by administrators, teachers, students, parents, and other community members.

3 Training for Administrators. Formal courses or less formal within-school programs for assisting school leaders (principals, department heads etc.) with areas such as the processes of administration, handling personal relationships, facilitating change.

4 The School and the Community. The broadening of the base of school operation to allow for interaction between the school and the community, which may take the form of access to school and community facilities for both groups, or teaching involvement by both groups in the school and in the community.

5 Alternative Organizational Arrangements. Maximising educational opportunities for students of different ages and abilities by providing structures that differ from the traditional primary and secondary structures; for example senior colleges, sub-schools, vertical grouping, the junior secondary school, co-operative ventures across levels (pre-school, primary, secondary, TAFE) and across systems (government and non-government).

Teaching

6 Assessment and Credentials. The investigation of present procedures and new methods of student assessment, reporting, and credentialling, to take into account a broad range of attributes and abilities (cognitive, affective, physical, social).

7 Discipline and Control. Determination of the appropriate balance of freedom and restraint with regard to student behaviour, by means such as the encouragement of self-discipline and self-responsibility in students, dialogue between staff and students to determine codes of behaviour, student involvement in aspects of school governance.

Importance

8 Pastoral Care. The recognition of the importance of the teacher-student relationship in learning acquisition and social development, and the provision of care and counselling for individual students by the classroom teacher and by trained personnel.

9 Professional Development of Teachers. The provision of in-service education within and outside the school to stimulate teachers and to provide them with the skills necessary for their present and future roles as educators, including the opportunity to move in and out of the teaching field.

Other Issues in Organization

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CLASSIFICATION OF ISSUES: CURRICULUM

Personal Development

10 Preparation for the World of Work. The preparation of students for their futures in the working world may include the study of work as a human activity, career guidance, work experience, training in special occupational skills, understanding the implications of employment.

11 Enquiry and Processing Skills. The encouragement of independent thinking, the development of problem-solving skills, teaching students how to seek out, interpret and evaluate information from various sources.

12 Communication Skills. The development in students of inter-personal skills and the ability to communicate effectively in speech as well as in writing.

13 Education of Disadvantaged Students. Curriculum planning that caters specifically for the needs of students that are disadvantaged because of language, culture, sex, geographic isolation, or intellectual or physical handicap.

14 Education of Gifted Children. Curriculum planning that allows for or specializes in the attainment of excellence in academic areas or in areas of particular artistic or physical skills.

Importance

15 Integrated Studies and Courses. Curriculum planning that integrates knowledge from separate areas on the basis of, for example, particular themes, students' own interests and experience, or a sequential course of study.

16 Technology in Education. Developing an understanding of the place of technology in our society and the implications of technological change, as well as developing the necessary skills to cope with technological equipment and procedures.

17 Physical Education. The study of physical development and health education, and the development of physical fitness and sporting skills.

18 Education for Leisure. The preparation of students for present and future participation in and appreciation of a range of cultural and recreational pursuits.

19 Basic Skills. Bringing all children to a level of competence in the basic skills of reading, mathematics, and written expression.

20 Core Curriculum. The development of a set of learning experiences that should be acquired by all students as a basis for personal development and social participation.

Social Development

21 Moral Education. A study of the moral aspects of social issues, which may be taught in the context of several disciplines or as a separate subject, or it may be interpreted as the teaching of particular religious beliefs.

22 Co-operative Learning. Developing an awareness of the value of co-operation as well as competition as a motivation for learning, teaching students how to work together for their mutual benefit.

23 Multicultural Education. A study of the diverse strands that are now part of Australian society which may incorporate such aspects as language, history, customs, social attitudes, national identity.

24 Development of Personal Identity. The development of each student's sense of personal worth, self-understanding, and self-direction.

25 Special Social Competencies. The development of non-vocational skills necessary for life as a competent member of society, skills that are relevant to areas such as marriage, sex, driving, safety, budgeting.

Importance

26 Contemporary Society and Social Change. The development of a sense of social responsibility through a study of the framework and structures of contemporary society and the factors that contribute to social change.

Other Issues in Curriculum

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Practices in Your School that Exemplify Priority Issues

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Potential Issues of Importance for Your School

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Over recent years there has been an increasing amount of public and political discussion of educational directions and educational accountability in relation to our primary and secondary schools. The study reported in this monograph attempted to address these concerns through a four-stage process: a review of community expectations of schooling; the development of a classification of educational issues; a survey of 400 primary and secondary government and non-government school principals to determine their priorities among the issues; and, in 27 of the survey schools, detailed studies of school practices which exemplified the priority issues.

Some significant differences between the groups emerged in the data analysis: Pastoral Care and Moral Education were issues of particular importance to non-government school principals from both levels; Co-operative Learning was particularly important to primary government school principals; Preparation for the World of Work was much more important to secondary than primary school principals; and the issues of Technology in Education and Special Social Competencies were of particular importance to secondary government school principals. From the study of selected schools it was possible to identify a number of factors, recurring in a variety of educational situations, that were associated with successful practice. These common elements of successful practice were related to program, process, and personnel.

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
ISBN 0 855 63 349 2